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A  
*Philosophical Discourse*  
CONCERNING  
The Natural Immortality of  
the **SOUL**.

Wherein the Great Question of the **SOUL's**  
**Immortality** is Endeavour'd to be Rightly  
Stated, and fully Clear'd.

OCCASION'D

By Mr. **DODWELL's** late  
*Epistolary Discourse.*

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In Two Parts.

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By **JOHN NORRIS**, M. A.  
Rector of Bemerton.

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*Qui bene distinguit, bene docet.*

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**LONDON:**

Printed for *S. Manship* at the *Ship* over-against the  
*Royal-Exchange*, in *Cornhil*, 1708.

Philosophical Discourse

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By JOHN MORRIS, M.A.

Reader of Divinity

Quintus, Augustus, last day.

LONDON:

Printed for J. Stiles, at the Ship over against the  
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TO THE  
READER,

**T**HO' this Treatise owes its Birth to Mr. Dodwell's late Book as the Occasion of it, yet I concern my self no further in the Controversy between him and his Adversaries than only as to the Natural Immortality of the Soul, and that too no further than (for the better Accommodation of it) to endeavour to exhibit a right state of the Question, that being what I apprehend most likely

## To the Reader.

to be wanting both upon the Subject it self, and in the late Debates that have been concerning it, by what I have seen of them.

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And tho' I happen to appear in the Rear of this Controversy, yet I think that what is here undertaken should have been done at first, and that 'twould be well if all Questions were first stated before they are disputed, according to that laudable Practice observ'd in our Academical Exercises of premising what we call a Supposition before the Argumentation. And if this be thought necessary in Scholastic Disputes which are for Exercise and Tryal's sake, much more is it in such Debates as are serious and in good Earnest, and upon Matters of the Highest Importance. For by this means, not only a great deal of trifling Amusement, and impertinent Wrangling is cut off, but also  
many

## To the Reader.

many Heats and Passionate Movements prevented, which but ill become either Philosophers or Christians. Both which it concerns to preserve such a Temper in their Ingagements, that they may not lose Charity, while they inquire after Truth.

I have bestow'd a pretty deal of Consideration upon the Matter in hand, and therefore am the more likely to have Stated it right. And I hope I have done so, and also that I have express'd my Thoughts with a competent Measure of Clearness, so as to be understood by those of the Learned (for my very Subject limits me to them) who will be pleas'd to afford Attention enough to understand what perhaps cannot be understood without it, and that tho' I should be otherwise never so clear. Which indeed is what I always endeavour to be, as  
thinking



## To the Reader.

thinking Darknes and Obscurity next to Errour and Mistake in Reasoning, One of the greatest Faults in any Writer. I hope I have avoided both. But yet however being sensible what an Important as well as Nice Argument I am concern'd in, as also of my own Infirmary in managing it, I willingly submit what I have written to maturer and better Judgments, being ready upon better Information, to depart from any thing that is here maintain'd.

There is a Passage in † St. Ambrose relating to the matter we are upon, which I would commend to the Consideration of the Learned Reader. *Alia Immortalitas suæ (that is Divinæ) Naturæ, alia nostræ est. Non sunt Fragilia comparanda Divinis.*

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† Tom. 4. De fide ad gratianum Augustum. lib. 3. c. 2.

## To the Reader.

Una sola substantia Divinitatis est, quæ Mori nescit. Unde & Apostolus cum sciret & Animam & Angelos Immortales, quod solus Deus Immortalitatem habeat prædicavit. Again, Nec Angelus Immortalis est naturaliter, cujus Immortalitas in voluntate est Creatoris. When the Reader has perused this Discourse, he will find how far these Words are to my purpose, and how far they disagree with the Principles upon which I proceed. That wherein he seems to me to be faulty is, that he affirms that absolutely of the Immortality of the Soul, which is true of it only in one determinate sense. And the same I take also to be the Fault of Mr. D. And accordingly the main thing wherein I make bold to differ from that Learned Person as to the Natural Mortality of the Soul, is that what he affirms concerning that  
matter

## To the Reader.

matter absolutely, I affirm only in a certain Respect. What that is the Reader will find in the perusal of the following Discourse, to which I now quietly leave him.

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### ERRATA.

Page 84. l. 6. for of, read or. p. 102. l. 3. leave out and.

I crave leave to change one Expression, p. 103. l. 5. instead of, *being in power as to the Second, while he actually understood the First*, I would have it read, *being in power to the perception of the succeeding Object, while he actually understood that which was present to his View*.

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(i)

# DISCOURSE

CONCERNING

The Natural Immortality of  
the SOUL, &c.

## PART I.

Wherein the Distinction of the Na-  
tural and the Positive Immortality  
of the Soul is Consider'd.

i. I Design not in this Treatise to renew  
a *Common-place* Discourse upon the  
old beaten Subject of the Soul's Im-  
mortality, which has so long imploy'd the  
Philosophy of both the Heathen and the  
Christian World, and has been made as  
evident

evident as the Nature of the thing would permit, and enough to serve the Interest of Morality, and the purposes of a vertuous Life, and which however it may be disputed by some whose Concern it is to have it otherwise (as indeed what is there that is not disputed in this Sceptical and very Infidel Age) is yet I suppose generally believ'd as a certain Truth, tho' perhaps it may not be consider'd with that seriousness and wakefulness of Attention, which a Truth of that Importance, not to say an Article of Christian Faith, may deservedly challenge. For so also it is, being made such by him who has brought Life and Immortality to light by the Gospel. Revelation has ascertain'd what Philosophy has represented as a very credible Theory, and what appears so worthy of all acceptance upon Principles of Natural Reason, is now further confirm'd, and fully determin'd by Faith; so that tho' the *Philosopher* should upon *his* Principles doubt of it, yet the *Christian* cannot.

2. Whether the Soul be *Immortal*, and whether the Soul be *Naturally Immortal*, are two Questions, and such as may require as well as admit of different Answers, one of these proceeding upon the supposition of the other as its ground, and being

a more



a more special Determination and Improvement of it. Natural Immortality supposes Immortality, as every special Idea does its general. But Immortality does neither suppose, nor necessarily infer *Natural* Immortality. The Reason is, because the species *actually* contains the Genus, as having that and something more; whereas the Genus contains the Species only in Power and Capacity. And so tho we may argue from this to that, yet we cannot argue from that to this. The Soul may be Immortal, and yet not *naturally* so. Whereby it plainly appears, that these are two Questions.

3. My present Concern is with the latter of these, not to consider the Immortality of the Soul absolutely and at large, but the *Natural* Immortality of it; and that not so much to *prove* that the Soul is naturally Immortal, as to *shew* and *explain* how and in what sense it is so. Some things perhaps may incidentally fall in relating to the other; but my main Business shall be not to prove the *Conclusion*, but rightly to state the *Question*. A thing very necessary to be done in all Cases of Controversy, and which notwithstanding all that has been written upon the Immortality of the Soul, I take to be very much wanting here. And therefore thinking it convenient that

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every



every one should be in some measure made able to entertain (what I believe very few have) a clear Notion of this matter, I shall endeavour to give what Light I can to it, hoping that what I shall do herein, may be of some Use and Service, not only for the ~~Clearing~~ and Illustrating a Noble and Important Argument in it self, but also for the better composing and accommodating some *Differences* that have, or may further arise about it.

4. But before I proceed to consider the Distinction of the Natural and the Positive Immortality of the Soul, these Terms *Natural* and *Positive*, as they are Absolutely taken, must be explain'd and settled in their due signification. In order to which I premise this General Remarque, That this Distinction of Natural and Positive, must be understood not of *Things* themselves, but of the *Properties* or *Affections* which we conceive as belonging to those things, or which in a Logical way of Predication we attribute to them, or affirm of them. For as to the things themselves, they are all *Positive*, being put into Being by the Pure and Arbitrary Will and Pleasure of God. But indeed the Attributes of things may be either one or the other, according as the Relation or Connexion between them

and

and their Subject is. If they are such as flow from the *Nature* of the things, so that the things being once put (for *they*, as I noted before, are Positive) they then Immediately and Necessarily result, then they are *Natural*. But if they do not flow from the Nature of the thing it self, but derive their Original from without, and are only connected with, or join'd to the thing by the Will or Power of an external Cause, then they are what we call *Positive*. For in that Case, the Property is as much *put* in being as the thing it self was supposed to be, and accordingly is as truly Positive as the other is. And so they are then both Positive, both the Thing and the Property too. But when the Property of it self flows from the Nature of the Thing, then tho the Thing be Positive, yet the Property belonging to it is *Natural*. An Instance in Morality will set this clear. We may suppose such an Action as the Subject, and Goodness or Badness as a certain Property belonging to it. Now as for the Action it self, 'tis plain that this is Positive, as depending upon the Will of the Doer, both when it is done, and whether it shall be done or no. But as to the Properties of Goodness or Badness, they are either *Natural* or *Positive*, according as they be-

*A Discourse concerning*

long to the Action, the supposed Subject of them. If they Immediately flow from the Nature of it, as when such an Action of it self conduces to the Happiness of Man, that is, serves as a Natural Means to that End, or else to the contrary, then these Properties are Natural. And accordingly, such Actions are then said to be Naturally, or Morally Good or Bad, as having these respective Properties *Naturally* belonging to them. But in Case (which is oftentimes more than a supposed one) these Properties do not result from the inward Nature of the Actions themselves, but from the pure Will and Authority of the *Law-giver*, commanding or forbidding such Actions to be done, tho otherwise indifferent whether done or no, then these Properties of Goodness or Badness are no other than Positive; and accordingly such Actions are said to be *Positively* good or bad, as also the *Law* it self is, which either commands or forbids them. For the Denomination of Positive is from the *Matter* of the Law, and not from the Law as such; for so all Laws, even that which is Natural, are Positive, as being *put* by the Will of the Law-giver. For tho' some things by their own Reasonableness, may be fit to be made the Matter of a Law, yet they have not the

Form



*the Natural Immortality of the Soul.* 7

Form of it till it be put. In this therefore all Law agrees, but 'tis the Matter that makes the Distinction.

5. And whereas I here make those Attributes or Properties of Things to be *Natural* which flow from their *Natures*, that we may maintain a Clearness as we go, I think it may be further expedient to define what is to be understood here by the word, *Nature*. And here not to go through the various Acceptations of this very equivocal Term, I shall only upon this Occasion note, that according to *Aquinas* \*, the word *Nature* was first imposed to signify the very *Generation* of Things that are ingendred (according to which account *Natura* is a *Nascendo*) and that from thence it was translated to signify the Principle of such a Generation, and from thence to signify that Principle of Motion that is intrinsic to the thing moved; And because such a Principle is either Matter or Form, *Nature* is further said to be the Form or Matter of the Natural Thing which has in it self a Principle of Motion. And because Form and Matter constitute the *Essence* of a Natural Thing, the name *Nature* is extended

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\* *Contra Gentiles*. Lib. 4. c. 45.

*A Discourse concerning*

to signify the *Essence* of any thing that exists. And in this last sense of the word it is that I would be understood by it in this place, when I speak of Properties, and in particular of Immortality, flowing from the *Nature* of certain Beings. By *Nature* I here mean the very *Essence* of the thing, that whereby the thing is what it is, and which we signify and express in the Definition of it. As when we say that there are two *Natures* in Christ, in opposition to *Entiches*, who that he might maintain his Personal Unity against *Nestorius* (who divided it) ran so far into the other Extreme, as to assert that there was also but one *Nature* in him; I say when we thus affirm that there are two *Natures* in Christ, our Meaning, I suppose, is that there are two distinct *Essences*, the Divine and the Human, tho' united together in One Person. This is therefore what I here understand by *Nature*, viz. the *Essence* of a Thing, as by *Natural* that which necessarily flows from this *Nature* or *Essence*.

6. I consider now that the Natural Immortality of the Soul supposes a positive Immortality, and is so call'd in Opposition to it. And that rightly. For the Immortality of the Soul, whatever we are to understand by it (whereof an Account

will

will be given in its place) is capable of a Twofold Division, and may be Consider'd either as Natural or as Positive. By the *Natural Immortality* of the Soul I understand that Immortality which is the immediate Effect or Consequence of its *Nature*. I say the *Immediate Effect*, to distinguish it *thoroughly* from that which is Positive. For even that also may in a Sense be the Effect or Consequence of the Nature of the Being that is indued with it. As suppose God by his mere Will and Power should sustain and continue a certain Creature (otherwise Mortal) in Being, upon the consideration of some Excellency in that Nature which he has given him, which he is unwilling should perish, when at the same time he suffers other Creatures of an Inferiour Order, who want that Natural Excellency (suppose the Image of himself) to drop into nothing. The Immortality of this Creature might doubtless in a true sense be said to be the Effect or Consequence of its Nature, since if this Creature had not had that Excellent Nature, God would not have preserv'd him in Being. But however since 'tis not the *Immediate Effect* of its Nature, but of the Will and Power of God, which is the *Immediate Cause* of it, this cannot properly



perly be said to be what we are here to understand by a Natural, as that stands opposed to a positive Immortality.

7. To distinguish it from which we must therefore say, that by the Natural Immortality of the Soul we are to understand that which is the *Immediate* Effect of its Nature, that which is purely intrinsic to it, that which it has from within, from a Bottom and Fund of its own, that which springs from a Root in its Being, and immediately results from the very Principles of its Constitution, as I may say. In the same sense and manner as *Risibility* is the Natural Property of a Man; which it is as flowing from his very Nature, and not from the Will of his Creator, any otherwise than Mediate, as that Will is the cause of that Nature. Now whether there be any such Natural Immortality as this actually belonging to the Soul, is another Question, of which what Judgment is to be made, we may hereafter perhaps have a better light to discern by. But this I conceive is what we are properly to understand by it, which is all I am concern'd in at present.

8. By the *Positive* Immortality of the Soul, I understand that which is not the Immediate Effect of its Nature, nor flows from

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*the Natural Immortality of the Soul.* 11

from any inward Principle of it, but which accrues to it wholly from *without*, or from the Influence or Operation of an External Cause, as when a Creature otherwise Mortal is made Immortal by the Efficacious Will or Power of God, supernaturally preserving him in Being. *Supernaturally* I say. For even the common Influence whereby God upholds his Creatures, tho it may be consider'd as Natural with respect to the whole Oeconomy, and as it is according to the settled and stated Order of his Concourse, and the Ordinary Course or Method whereby he governs the World, is yet truly supernatural in the first Institution of it, and as to particular Creatures, as preserving them in that perpetuity of Being for which they have in their own Natures no inward Foundation. And in this sense this latter sort of Immortality may be said to be an Immortality of *Grace*, in Opposition and Contradistinction to that of *Nature*. For tho Grace may be sometimes taken for an Extraordinary \* Addition to that Ordinary Concurrence which God affords his Creatures (as indeed the more Extraordinary any help is, and the more God is

\* So it is in Divinity. For that Grace of God's holy Spirit whereby he assists us in order to the Attainment of a Supernatural End, supposes that Ordinary Concurrence whereby he Cooperates with us as Natural Agents.

pleas'd

pleas'd to step out of his Way to assist us; the greater is the *Grace* or Favour) yet even the Ordinary Concurrence it self is also properly *Grace*, as being something gratuitously superadded to the Nature of the Creature. For indeed whatever is more than Nature, and assists it either to *act* or to *be*, beyond the Intrinsic Force or Power of it, is truly and properly *Grace*.

9. This last Remarque directs us to another for the better Understanding and Explaining the Distinction that is before us. Which is, that by the *Natural* Immortality of the Soul we are not consequently to understand that which it has with, or including that Ordinary Concurrence whereby God upholds and supports it in Being, but that which flows purely from its own Nature. As also that by the *Positive* Immortality of the Soul we are not to understand that only which it has from such an extraordinary Assistance as is superadded to the Ordinary, but also that which it has from that Assistance which is superadded to its *Nature*. So that even that Immortality which it has from what we call the Ordinary Influence or Concourse of God, is as truly *Positive* (tho not perhaps altogether so great a *Grace*) as the other, being not from its own Nature, but from some Extrinsic Addition to it. And therefore they who shall



shall ascribe no other Immortality to the Soul than this, and yet will call this a Natural Immortality, are inconsistent with themselves, as not really ascribing to it (whatever they may intend) any Immortality, but what is indeed Positive.

10. From hence it appears that the former sort of Immortality is a real *Inherent* Perfection belonging to the Soul, being as a Property that immediately flows from the very Essence of a thing, and is accordingly inseparable from it. For which Reason that Being which is naturally Immortal is in some sense immutably so. So that this sort of Immortality both *is*, and *supposes* a real Excellence and Perfection in the Soul wherein it is lodged, since 'tis the peculiar Excellency of its Nature that is the ground of it. But now 'tis much otherwise as to the other sort of Immortality. That neither is, nor supposes any real inherent Perfection in the Being that is indued with it (since any thing may be Immortal in that Sense if God pleases) but rather Weakness and Infirmary. He indeed that bestows this sort of Immortality magnifies his own Power by it, and if it be to any purpose of Kindness, his *Goodness* too, but he that receives it becomes thereby a standing and lasting Monument of Impotence and Disability.

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And it would be to no purpose for him to disown, what his constant Dependency for ever confesses.

11. This last Consideration may serve to point out to us this further Difference between a Natural and a Positive Immortality, that as a Positive Immortality proceeds from Will, so it also depends intirely upon Will for the continuance of it, and is liable at the pleasure of that Will to be taken away again. And so is all over precarious. But now that Immortality which is Natural as it does not proceed from Will, so neither does it depend upon it, any otherwise than indirectly and in a *Mediate* Sense, so far as the Nature which has it either might not have been, or when it is may cease to be, or be annihilated. For as 'tis not Will that immediately confers it, so neither can it be conceiv'd how it should be in the Power of any Will to take it away, unless the Subject of it be taken away too, since that being supposed to exist, the other must coexist with it, as immediately resulting from it. But indeed that not being a *necessary* Supposition as to *Creatures*, it must be confess'd that they can have no Immortality so Natural but what in some sense depends upon Will. But then 'tis only in a *divided*,  
not

not in a *compounded* Sense, as the Schools speak, since what we call a Natural Immortality cannot be separated from the Subject of it, tho it may cease with it. So that the only way whereby such an Immortality can be subjected to, or come under the dominion of any Will, is either by not creating, or by annihilating the Nature supposed to have it. But now 'tis quite otherwise in a Positive Immortality, which proceeding immediately from Will, is immediately and directly liable to the Dominion of it. The Nature need not (as in the other Case) be Annihilated, for the taking away of this, tho perhaps when it is taken away Annihilation may be the Consequence of it. But that's from the Infirmary of the Creature. And herein I have prevented an Objection which otherwise perhaps might appear not a little intangling. For whereas I say that Natural Immortality cannot be taken away without the Annihilation of the Subject of it, to this it may be objected that neither can a Positive Immortality be taken away without the like Annihilation, and so that they are in this respect both equal, wherein yet I suppose them to differ. But to this I answer that there is a Fallacy in the Term *without*, which in the former of these Propositions



positions respects the *Condition*, and in the latter the *Consequence*. When I say that Natural Immortality cannot be taken away without the Annihilation of its Subject, my Meaning is that it cannot be taken away without it as a prerequisite or antecedent Condition. That is, the Nature it self must first be Annihilated before that its Property can be taken away, and that because that Property is supposed necessarily to follow upon the Position of such a Nature. But now a Positive Immortality being directly and immediately from the Will of God, *may* be also directly and immediately taken away by the same Will, and consequently *without* the Annihilation of the Subject as that signifies a *Condition* in order to it, tho (in a certain Case) not without it as a *Consequence*, as will be better understood hereafter.

12. This *Positive Immortality* of the Soul may be illustrated by what carried some Proportion to it in the Body of *Adam*, which had in it an Instance, or at least an *Image* of it. *Adam* as to his Bodily Life must have been in some Sense truly Immortal, since Death was threatned to him as the Punishment of his eating the Forbidden Fruit, whereby it is implied, that if he had not Eaten of it, he should not have

Died.

Died. And yet it seems plain that this Immortality of his was not a strict Natural Immortality simply and absolutely speaking, since otherwise (not to insist upon the Foundation of Mortality laid in his Nature) 'twill be hard to assign a reason why we should not be Immortal too. For *Naturals* remain intire even after Sin, as may appear in the Fall'n Angels. And yet we may allow him to have been so far Naturally Immortal too, in that his Body tho' in it self Passible and Corruptible as ours is, as being made up and compounded of contrary Principles, was yet so admirably well temper'd and complexiōn'd by the just mixture of those Ingredients, as to have lasted a very long time, even upon the solitary stock of its own proper Constitution. And God might have given him if he had pleas'd such a Firmness of Constitution as would have made him last for ever, as the School of *Aristotle* fancies he has done to the Celestial Bodies; and as we Christians believe he will do to the Saints at the *Resurrection*. But what was wanting to his Natural, was supplied by a Positive Immortality, whereof he was a perfect Instance, being arm'd against the now Fatal Artillery of Time and Death by that sovereign Elixir and Antidote against Mortality;

C

talities, the Tree of Life, whose *Immortalizing* Fruit was to preserve him while he was in his State of Innocence, till God should otherwise dispose of him, and would have preserv'd him when *out* of it too, if he might have had the same free Recourse to it as before. As appears from those dimissory words, importing the reason of his Expulsion from Paradise, *lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the Tree of Life, and eat and live for ever.* Gen. 3. 22.

13. Upon this Occasion I shall crave leave to drop a Remarque by the way, relating to a Question of considerable Importance, and that is how far Death at present is Natural, and how far the Effect, or Punishment of Sin. To which upon the foregoing Supposition it will not be difficult to return a clear and satisfactory Answer in a few words. For according to what is premised, Death is both Natural and the Punishment of Sin too, tho' in different Respects. It is Natural so far as we have in our Natures the Principles of Mortality. And 'tis also from Sin as depriving us of that which was ordain'd as a Remedy against it. The removal of which not depriving us of any Natural Right, but only leaving us to the Original Condition



*the Natural Immortality of the Soul.* 19

dition of our Nature, exposes us to that Death which without that extraordinary Provision to the contrary, would have been the natural Consequence of it. For indeed tho' Man was Naturally Mortal, yet that Mortality had never pass'd into Act without Sin in transgressing the Divine Commandment. So then Mortality is of Nature; but Actual Death is the Effect of Sin, as taking away that which would otherwise have hinder'd it. And to this well agrees what a great School-man \* to this purpose very remarkably says, when he tells us, that Death is in us from Nature, *tanquam a Causâ per se*, and from Sin; *tanquam a Causâ removente prohibens*.

14. But to return to a more close per-  
suance of the Matter in hand, for the more exact comprehension of which, I offer this further Observation, that *Immortality* ought not to be confounded with *Everlasting Existence*, which are very distinct things; the One importing the *Act* only, whereas the Other imports a *Power*. Which Power indeed is either from within, or from without, according as the Immortality is either Natural or Positive. But be it which it

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\* *Durandus*. Lib. 2. Dist. 30. Q. 1.

will, *Immortality* bespeaks a Power that any thing has some way or another to continue or persist in its Being, so as not to be capable of Dying. Which distinguishes it from *Everlasting Existence*, which only denotes the very Act of such a persisting in Being, without relation to any Power whatsoever, from which it perfectly abstracts. And if *Everlasting Existence* ought not to be confounded with *Immortality* itself, much less ought it with a *Natural Immortality*. For *Natural Immortality* is something more than *Immortality*, and if it be distinct from the *less*, much more from the *greater*. The *Everlasting Existence* therefore of a thing does not prove it to have a *Natural Immortality*. Besides that if it did, it would, I am afraid, quite shut out that which is *Positive*, and so ruin our Distinction. For if that which has an *Everlasting Existence* were *Naturally Immortal* (as we must say if *Everlasting Existence* and *Natural Immortality* were the same) then for ought I know every thing would be *Naturally*, and nothing *Positively Immortal*. For there is great reason to think, how peculiar a Privilege so ever *Immortality of Nature* may be. yet that there is nothing but what shall *Everlastingly Exist*, Annihilation (how-

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ever favour'd by some Mens Divinity) being utterly un-supposable in Philosophy, and what we have no Instance of in Nature.

15. Before I leave this Consideration of Natural and Positive Immortality, I have one more Observation to make for the further clearing of it. Which is that this Distinction, so far as it relates to Creatures, must be consider'd as *Posterior* or *Consequential* to the Constitution of things, and proceed upon the supposal of their having a certain actual Reality or Existence in Nature. For Antecedently to that all things are purely and intirely Positive. I say Antecedently to that, or which is the same, Absolutely speaking. For as God willing nothing necessarily but Himself, as being not only alone invincibly Lovely, but also alone, that is by himself, sufficient for his own Happiness, was under no necessity of bringing any Creature into Being, so likewise Existence being not at all Essential to Creatures, there was also no necessity from *themselves* that they should ever be. And consequently when ever they are, they must be *put* in Being, and so have a *Positive* Existence. All things therefore according to this Absolute and Antecedent way of Consideration, except God and



the Divine Ideas, and those necessary and immutable Truths which result from them, are purely Positive and Contingent, mere *Matters of Fact*, that might not have been, and that arise into Being not from any Root of it which they have in themselves, but from the free Determination of that Efficient Cause, by whose Will and Power they even still continue to subsist. For indeed in all things without himself God acts not by Necessity of Nature, but by the Free Determination of his Will, only receiving Direction from his Wisdom, which the Scripture puts together, calling it *the Counsel of his own Will*, Eph. i. 11. 'Tis only within himself that we can conceive him in any sense to be as a necessary Agent. And so the whole Creature is Positive, tho' that Eternal and Divine Word, whereby as by an *Archetypal Reason* it was made, be a necessary Emanation from him.

16. But we are not so directly concern'd at present with the Natures or Essences of Things, as with the Properties which flow from those Essences. Which however they may now be supposed naturally and necessarily so to do, taking Things as they actually are, and according to their present state of Being in *rerum Naturâ* as we say, yet Antecedently to that, and Absolutely consider'd

consider'd they must be of a Positive Original, and that because the very *Essences* of the Things themselves (as they exist in *Nature* I mean, and not as they are in *Idea*) are so, mere Positive and Contingent Realities, and such as might not have been at all. And then what would have become of their *Properties*? These therefore absolutely consider'd must be Positive too, even those of them which we call Necessary and Inseparable. For indeed the more inseparably any Property shall adhere to such an Essence, still the more Absolutely Positive and Contingent it will be, as more nearly partaking with it in its Nature and Fate. The Branch may spring very naturally from the Root, but 'tis impossible that it should have a more stable tenure of Life than the Root it self has from whence it takes its rise. So that thus far there is no room for this Distinction, since even that which we now call a Natural Immortality, is in this sense *Positive*.

17. But 'tis but to take our Date a little lower, and there will soon be room for it. For notwithstanding that things are thus Absolutely Positive and Contingent in their first Institution, there being no necessary Reason either from themselves, or from their Cause why they should be, yet if we

consider them as already settled and stated in a certain order and condition of Being, nothing hinders but that several Properties may naturally and (upon that supposition) necessarily arise from them, so that it shall be impossible for such things to be, without being accompany'd with such Properties or Affections. And that because their very Essence it self (without which nothing can be) is the immediate Ground and Principle of them. And many such Properties there are in Natural Beings, which flow so necessarily from their Subjects, that they are even demonstrable of them, which otherwise they could not be. So that what is Absolutely and Antecedently Positive may in this sense (which indeed is the only sense wherein it can be applied to any Creature) become natural and necessary. And herein I have the Concurrence of a great Authority, in these to our present Purpose very pertinent and remarkable words. \* *Quod tales rerum Naturae a Deo producerentur voluntarium fuit. Quod autem eis sic statutis aliquid proveniat vel existat, absolutam Necessitatem habet.* That such certain Natures of Things were pro-

\* Contra Gentiles. Lib. 2. cap. 30.



duced by God, was voluntary. But that they being so constituted any thing should arise or exist from them, has an absolute Necessity. Nor is any Exception to be made upon his using the word *Absolute* here, as if this were contrary to our foregoing Account, since this Absoluteness is by him consider'd only as posteriour to the constitution of things, in which sense I deny not, but contend that some Properties of things are Absolutely necessary, tho' again Absolutely, as that signifies *Antecedently* to that Constitution, they are all Positive, as was said before. So then in short, the things themselves are not necessary, but only the Properties of them. Nor they as Antecedently, but only as *Consequentially* consider'd. And so indeed they are. And therefore the sum is, that tho' the things themselves are all Positive, and tho' the Properties of them are so also Absolutely and Antecedently consider'd, yet consequentially speaking to the Being of things, some of those Properties may and will (in that sense) be Natural and Necessary. Which is all the Necessity that can stand with the Notion of a Creature.

18. And this is sufficient to lay a ground for the present Distinction, to distinguish what we call a Natural from what we call a Positive

**Positive Immortality.** For by *Positive* here is not, or at least should not be meant that which is Absolutely and Antecedently so. For then one part of the Distinction would swallow up the other, since in that sense, as was before observ'd, even *Natural* it self is *Positive*. But by a Positive Immortality should be meant such as is consequentially so, such as supposes and follows upon the constitution of a thing in actual Being, when even *then* it has no Immortality but what arises from without it self, from an additional Support to its Nature. In opposition to which by a Natural Immortality we should understand, that which is so also in the same *Consequential* Sense, viz. that there are some Beings which tho' Absolutely of a Positive Original, yet when once constituted in Being, have an Immortality immediately flowing from the very Constitution of their Nature, as an Essential and Inseparable Property. And so their Immortality may be said to be natural and necessary in the same sense that other Essential Properties are. Whose Necessity is a Consequential Necessity, in that they necessarily result upon the *Free* Position of Things, which being quite otherwise in that Immortality we call Positive, which even when a supposed Nature is put does not follow from

from it, the Distinction between a Natural and a Positive Immortality becomes hereby just and opposite.

19. And as this is the *Most* that Immortality can possibly signify when applied to Creatures, that is I mean that it be an Immortality consequential to the Position of their Beings, since 'tis plain and certain that in the other Sense of it, God only has Immortality as the Apostle speaks, *1 Tim. 6. 16.* so 'tis also the *Least* that Natural Immortality can possibly signify in this Distinction, it being plain that that Immortality which is less than this is not truly a Natural, but a Positive Immortality. Indeed Antecedently to the Constitution of Nature all things are of a Positive Extraction, and so must their Properties be too that flow from their Natures, and that tho' they flow from them never so necessarily, it being impossible that they should have a more absolute and independent Being than the Natures themselves have from whence they flow. But when Nature shall be actualiz'd, and when a Creature shall be once constituted and completed in such a Degree and State of Being, if he has not then an Immortality resulting immediately and necessarily from the Essentials of his Nature, but shall still need a supernatural Force



Force and Operation for that purpose, as much as before to be brought into Being, and so is Immortalized not by a Principle of Immortality within himself, but by the supervenient and additional Succour of a superiour Cause, 'tis plain that then he has not a Natural, but a Positive Immortality. The difference between which two I shall further illustrate by this familiar, but perhaps not unapposite Comparison, that the former Immortality is like the Power which a Wall has to stand from the inward and original Strength of its own proper Constitution, the very Make or Frame of the Building, whereas the latter is like the Power which a Wall has to stand by Vertue of a *Prop* or *Buttress* added to it for its Support. The very placing of which *Buttress* supposes the Wall not to have Strength enough of its own, and whatever Strength it has more than that, ought not to be reckon'd as natural to it, tho' its Nature be preserv'd by it; the Nature of the Wall not being the *Spring* from whence this Strength *flowes*, but only the *Subject* wherein it is *receiv'd*.

20. Well, but have not all Creatures such a *Buttress* to stay and support them in Being, even the sustaining and preserving Influence of the Almighty, and is it not absolutely

solutely necessary that they should, as being not sufficient for a separate and independent subsistence? Yes, I freely acknowledge it, yea contend for it as an Article of my *Metaphysical* Creed, nor is any thing here intended to the contrary. But then I say (what will better appear in the Sequel of this Discourse) that so far as they need that *Collateral Prop* to uphold them in Being, so far they are not Naturally Immortal, nor is that the Natural Immortality (that I mean which relates to *Being*) which will be found properly to belong to the Soul, as will more fully appear hereafter. For the present it may suffice to say that this sort of Immortality is from *without*, from the Operation of an external Cause, whereas by a Natural Immortality must be meant that which is from *within*, and which supposing the Actuality of any Nature, necessarily results from it, as necessarily as any other Natural Property does from the Subject whose Property it is. Whether such an Immortality as this, tho' not in it self the greatest, be not yet too great for the Soul to have, is another Question, and depends upon other Considerations. But so I think it must be stated, or else it will be impossible to distinguish a Natural from a Positive Immortality. From  
which

which according to this way of stating and representing it, I conceive it appears to be very distinct. And thus the Distinction it self being clear, what we have further to do is to consider how and in what sense it may be applied to the Soul. Which opens to us an Entrance into the Second Part of this Discourse, which indeed is the Principal Part, to which what we have hitherto been considering is but Preparatory.

A



A  
DISCOURSE  
CONCERNING

The Natural Immortality of  
the SOUL, &c.

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PART II.

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Wherein is Consider'd how and in  
what Sense this Distinction is ap-  
plicable to the *Soul*.

I. **H**AVING thus far clear'd and pre-  
pared the way by stating and ad-  
justing the Distinction between a  
Natural and a Positive Immortality, let us  
now advance to the Application of this  
Distinction, by considering how and in  
what

what Sense the Soul of Man may be said to be *Naturally* Immortal. That so we may neither ascribe to it an Immortality whereof she is not capable, nor yet injuriously defraud her of that Immortality which is her native due and *Birthright*.

2. And here in the first place, and in general I think it is clear from the premised account that the Soul cannot claim a Natural Immortality in any other than that *Consequential* Sense before spoken of, which is that supposing her to be put into Being, and to have such a Nature given her as in fact she has, that then she will have an Immortality necessarily resulting from that Nature, and so in this Sense will be *Naturally* Immortal. But she cannot be so Absolutely and Antecedently, for so her very *Being* is Positive, much more her *Immortality*.

3. And thus far I think we are in a Clear Light. But I know not how to go one step farther till we have distinguish'd and defined that Immortality to which the Terms of Natural and Positive are join'd, and which by the ambiguity and uncertainty of its signification does not a little trouble and disturb the state of the present Question. For this Term Immortality being a Figurative word, translated from the Body to the Soul,

Soul, cannot well be supposed to be of a very clear meaning. Nor indeed is it, being also of a very unsettled and indeterminate signification. And 'tis for want of bringing it to a more fix'd and determinate Sense, and keeping strictly to it, that there has been so much Confusion and Intanglement about this Matter, both in those that contend *for* the Immortality of the Soul, and in those who argue *against* it. This therefore is first of all to be done, that so we may discern in what Sense we are to hold the Soul to be Naturally Immortal (even according to the forestated sense of *Natural*) and in what sense not.

4. I know but two Senses relating to this Question (and further we are not concern'd) that Immortality can reasonably be supposed to bear, but they are two such very different ones that what is rightly affirm'd of the one will be found not verifiable of the other, and therefore 'tis necessary to distinguish them, if we will talk intelligibly about this Matter. Immortal then may signify either the same as *Indissoluble* in opposition to Corruption, or else the same as *Unperishable* (for so I think I must call it for want of a better word) in opposition to Cessation of Being. And the same in Proportion is to be applied to

D *mortal;*



*mortal*, by which may be understood either what may be dissolv'd or corrupted, or what may absolutely perish or cease to be.

5. *Corruption* and *Perishing* I think are plainly two very different things, the one importing a total Privation of Being, and the other only a Privation of a certain *manner* of it. Of the substantial *Form* a School-Philosopher would say, a certain incomplete Substance which with *Matter* is supposed to constitute the *Compositum* as they call it, or a Natural Body. And which in the Corruption of it is supposed to be lost from the common Subject, and exchanged for another succeeding in its room, whereby a new Body is generated, according to that Maxim of theirs, that *the Corruption of one thing is the Generation of another*, that is, not formally, but effectively; as much as to say, that the Corruption of one thing is necessarily follow'd by the Generation of another. But indeed what these substantial Forms are, or what Necessity there is of them for the explaining those great Changes in Bodies which we call *Generation* and *Corruption* I am not able to conceive, thinking that they may be explain'd well enough without them, even by that Association or Assemblage of Accidents,

dents, or rather Modes (which is nothing else but a different Texture or Disposition of Parts) from whence Matter may be conceiv'd to receive all its Variety and Distinction. As when Snow suppose is turn'd into Water, and that Water into Ice, and that Ice into Water again. A new Texture of Parts without any substantial Forms will suffice to effect all this. Not but that we may allow an *Essential* Form, not meaning a distinct Substance, but only such a certain Contexture as is requisite to specify such a Body, to make it Gold or Brass, &c. And whether *Aristotle* meant any more by his *substantial* Forms, is a Question that may perhaps deserve to be consider'd. But however this be, this is certain that in *Corruption* there is only a Privation of something *belonging* to the Being of a thing (whether it be a substantial Form, or only a certain Texture of Parts is to our present purpose not material) but not of *Being* absolutely, the subject of the thing corrupted being still supposed to exist, tho' in a different Form or Texture; whereas when a thing *perishes*, there is an utter Privation of its very *Being*. Incorruptible therefore and Unperishable are two widely different things, and consequently Immortal as it signifies Incorruptible is as different from

Immortal as it signifies Unperishable.

6. Before I make use of these different Senses of Immortality in order to the clearer Determination of the great Question now under Consideration, I have this previous Observation by way of Caution to enter, that since these things are so very different, as proceeding upon Ideas altogether distinct, we should not be over-forward to argue from one to the other, especially considering that to be Naturally unperishable is something *more*, and what bespeaks a greater Permanency and Stability in Being than to be Naturally incorruptible. Corruption is a much less Change than a total Cessation from Being is, and accordingly that degree of Natural Strength which may be a Security against Corruption, may be found to be no Fence against Annihilation.

7. 'Tis not in Natural as in Moral Defects. In these, the least Defects are hardest to be withstood. And so we find that that Degree of Vertue which will keep a Man from Murther or Adultery, will not be a sufficient Guard against a vain Thought, or an idle passionate Word. But in *Naturals* 'tis much otherwise; here the greatest Defects are oftentimes to be withstood with most Difficulty, and accordingly that  
Strength



Strength of Natural Constitution which will keep a Man from Sickneſs or a Diſeaſe, will not preſerve him from Death.

8. Now as to the Queſtion concerning the Natural Immortality of the Soul, theſe things being thus premiſed I ſay, that as Immortal ſignifies *Incorruptible*, there is no reaſonable doubt to be made but that the Soul according to the Notion we have of it, and allowing it to be ſuch a ſort of Being as we conceive it to be (upon which Suppoſition I proceed) is *Naturally* Immortal. For the Soul as we conceive of it (whether rightly or no I am not now to diſpute) is a Simple, Spiritual and Immaterial Being, and that alone is Foundation enough for this ſort of Natural Immortality, which conſiſts in *Incorruptibility*.

9. For Corruption is nothing elſe but a certain Diviſion, Diſſolution, or Separation of Parts, ſince as long as any Body retains the ſame Order and Poſition of its Parts, interiour as well as exteriour, ſo long it is underſtood not to be another, but the ſame. That it is ſo in the Natural, we may the better apprehend from the Conſideration of an *Artificial* Body. A Watch as it conſiſts of ſuch Materials abſolutely conſider'd is a *Natural*, but as thoſe Materials are ſo order'd, arranged, and adjusted

one to another, so it is an *Artificial* Body. Now so long as these Parts of the Watch retain their Posture and Union with one another, so long the Watch continues in the Form and Nature of a Watch. But when these Parts are disunited or taken asunder, then tho' the Parts themselves continue, yet the *Watch* is dissolv'd, or if you will, *corrupted*. In like manner we are to conceive of a *Natural* Body, whose Dissolution or Corruption, if we could see the minute Particles whereof it consists, would appear to be every whit as *Mechanical* as that of a Watch. That is, as much a real Separation of Parts. But then that which has no Parts, as an Immaterial Being (such as we conceive the Soul to be) has not, cannot possibly be corrupted. And so Incorruptibility necessarily and immediately follows from the very Nature of the Soul, and is as an essential a Property of it, as that its 3 Angles be equal to 2 right ones, is the Property of a *Triangle*.

10. Nor would it make any alteration as to the Point in Question, nor consequently be any Objection against it, tho' we should take Corruption after the *Aristotelean* way of stating it, for the Privation or Loss of the *Substantial Form*, as they call it. For tho' this Substantial Form  
be

be not conceiv'd as one of those *Integral* Parts which we have been speaking of, yet however according to their own way of explaining it, it is an *Essential* Part, that helps to constitute the *Compositum*. And consequently *Corruption* which is supposed to be the *Privation* of this Form, will even upon this Supposition be still found to consist in a Separation of one Part from another, which cannot possibly be but in a Material and Compounded Being, and therefore not in the Soul, which we do not conceive to be *either* of them. I conclude therefore that the Soul is, and by the very Nature of it must needs be *Incorruptible*, and so in this Sense *Naturally Immortal*.

II. And because we cannot conceive how the Natures or *Essences* of Things can be changed or destroy'd even by the Divine Power it self, however Positive and Arbitrary the *Existencies* of them may be (these being some of those things which as St. *Austin* \* says, *Deus potenter non potest*) therefore as the Soul appears to be thus *Naturally Immortal*, so we must in the same Sense conclude it to be also *Immutably* so. God indeed may *annihilate* any thing, or

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\* *Contra sermonem Arrianorum, cap. 14.*



all things that he has made, nothing having an Absolute Necessity of Being but himself, who is the Root of it; but how he should *Corrupt* an Immaterial Being is not Conceivable, since to dissolve that into Parts which has None, would be a Contradiction in it Self, as well as contrary to what is due to the Nature of such a Being. I say *due*, for tho' Creation does not proceed upon any Debt of Justice Absolutely and Antecedently Speaking, since in that Sense as the Apostle says, *Rom. 11. 35. Who has first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? for of him, and through him, and to him are all things*, yet supposing God to Will the Existence of things, they must have what is Essentially belonging to those Natures which he has given them, and those Immutable Ideas of his own, whereby they are Made. They must have what their Ideas contain. A Man must have a Soul and a Body, and a Triangular Figure must have its three Angles equal to two right Ones, &c. And it would be a Contradiction that those things should be at all, and not be so. For this would be the same as for a Man to be a Man and no Man, and for a Triangle to be a Triangle and no Triangle, which would resolve into that great formal Contradiction, to be and not to

to be at once. Nor does God hereby become a Debtor to the Creature, but only to the Disposition of his own *Will*, whose Perfection also is to follow the Ideas of his *Wisdom*.

12. If any make any question whether the *Immateriality* of the Soul be sufficient to conclude it to be Immortal, I suppose it is because either they have a loose, general and confuse Notion of *Immortality*, without considering what they precisely mean by it (and then indeed no wonder if they don't see the Force of the Argument, which is to *prove*, when they don't so much as Know what the Conclusion is which is to be *proved*) or else if they do mean any thing precise and distinct by Immortality, they mean something else than *Incorruptibility*. And then again it will be no wonder if the Argument be found defective for the Proof of a Conclusion which lies beyond the reach of the Premises. But taking Immortality for *Incorruptibility*, I think it Necessarily follows from the Immateriality of the Soul that it is *Thus* Immortal, and that tho' it may be *Annihilated*, yet it cannot possibly be *Corrupted*.

13. This may occasion an Enquiry whether Immateriality be the *only* Ground of Incorruption. To which I answer, that a thing

thing may be conceiv'd Incorruptible two ways. Either as having *no* Parts, or as having its Parts so united as not to be capable of Separation. The Consequence of both which would indeed be *Natural Incorruptibility*. But with this Difference, that what has not any Parts at all, but is simply and Purely Immaterial, is naturally Incorruptible *Absolutely* speaking, and with respect to all Power whatsoever. Whereas the other is so only in a certain respect, and as to *Natural Agents*. For it would be so far Corruptible as *Divisible*, and that it would also be in it self, tho' perhaps as to *Natural Agents*, *indivisible*. In like manner as we say as to the Division of *Quantity*, that it may be divided so long till the Over-Minute Particles of it can be divided no longer, that is, by any finite Agent, or material Instrument, and yet absolutely speaking there is no assignable Part of it but what is still Divisible in it self, and upon this is grounded the Infinite Divisibility of Quantity. And what is here supposed as to the smallness of the Parts, must be supposed to hold equally as to the *Union* of them. And therefore not only the *Celestial Bodies* which the School Philosophy will have to be Incorruptible, but even the *Resurrection Bodies* of the Saints which



a better Authority assures us shall be so, must yet be conceiv'd to be *Absolutely* Corruptible. And therefore when St. Paul says that the Dead shall be raised Incorruptible, and that this Corruptible shall put on Incorruption, he cannot reasonably be thought to mean this of an *Absolute* Incorruptibility, as if our Bodies at the Resurrection were to be so temper'd that even God himself by that Power whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself were not able to Corrupt them (for then they must cease to be *Bodies*, since whatever consists of Parts is absolutely Dissolvable into Parts) but only that they should be so temper'd as neither to tend to a Dissolution by any Principles of Corruption (such as Elementary Bodies are conceiv'd to have) within themselves, nor yet to be capable of being dissolv'd by the Impressions of other Bodies upon them, as they are now, or by any other Physical Action. And this is Incorruption enough to serve any End or Purpose of Religion, and indeed as much as any *Body*, even a *Spiritual* one, can have. But yet this Incorruption tho' truly Natural, as flowing from the peculiar Nature and Temper of those Bodies, is yet very different from, and far inferiour to that of the Soul, which by the Singular Priviledge

Priviledge of its Immaterial Nature is not only in this or that respect, but *Absolutely* Incorruptible.

14. And thus far we have Consider'd the Natural Immortality of the Soul, as Immortal signifies Incorruptible, and shewn the Soul to be in this Sense naturally Immortal. But now as to the other Sense of Immortal, as that signifies *unperishable* in opposition to a total Cessation from Being, I must needs freely and ingenuously acknowledge that I do not see how the Soul is, or in this Sense can be *naturally* Immortal. For to be naturally Immortal in this Sense is for a thing to have in it Self the Root of Being, and a Principle of necessary Existence, since if it had not, however it may be preserv'd in Being by the Power of some higher Cause, yet of it self, and for any thing its own Nature implies to the contrary, it might, and if left to it self, would certainly fail and cease to be, which is contrary to the supposition of a Being in this Sense naturally Immortal. But now no Creature has or can have a Principle of necessary Existence in it self, and that because Being is not of the Essence of any Creature, its Essence does not include Existence in it, but may be perfectly and intirely Conceiv'd without it. And accordingly

dingly whenever it does Exist, it is purely\* *Accidental* to it that it does so.

15. In the Divine Nature, and there only it is otherwise. God is a Being that has the Root of Being in himself, from whose Essence Being cannot be separated so much as in *Thought*, and whose very Idea includes it. Being is of his very Essence, or rather his very Essence is Being, *Essence* and *Being* being in him but One and the self same thing, since otherwise he would be Compounded of Essence and Being, in like manner as all Creatures are, which is plainly repugnant to the formal Conception of his all perfect Nature, and what no sound Metaphysics can allow. He therefore is *Being it self*. Which Sublime Truth derives its Stream from a higher Fountain than the Schools of the Metaphysicians, being that very Account of himself which God gave to *Moses*, who when he inquir'd of God by what Name he should signify him to the People of *Israel*, if they should demand it of him, receiv'd this August and Tremendous, and at the same time truly Philosophical Answer, *I am that I am*, *Exod. 3.*

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\* Not as Accidental signifies by Chance, but as Accidental signifies Præter-Essential.



14. And again, thus shalt thou say to the Children of *Israel*, *I am* hath sent me unto you. And therefore since God defines himself by it, and takes his great Incommunicable Name from it, we may conclude that Being is his very Essence, it being not to be supposed that he should chuse that for his proper and distinguishing Name which did not expresse his Nature.

16. And indeed since the great God has appropriated this to himself as his singular and peculiar Prerogative to have Being it self for his very Nature and Essence, this alone would be a sufficient reason why we should not ascribe it to any Creature. But indeed neither is any Creature capable of it, as I before observ'd. Tho' he now actually is, yet Being is no part of his Essence, and so it is not at all necessary that he should be. If it were, he would be *Eternal* as well as *Everlasting*, for 'tis that very thing that makes God to be so. Which again further shews that Being is not Essential to the Creature, and that he has not in himself any Foundation of necessary Existence. And if so, then consequently as he might not have been, so now (for there is the same reason for both) for any Power he has to preserve himself in being, he may again *not be*; and therefore as he could  
not

not exist at first without the Divine Omnipotent *Word*, so now he needs the same Power to support him in Being which first call'd him into it. Without the continu'd Influence of which he could not subsist for one Moment, so that God need only withdraw that his Conservative Influence to annihilate him, or make him cease to be. And accordingly 'tis the common Doctrin of the Schools (and *Suares* has sufficiently prov'd it) that *Conservation* and *Creation* are not actions *really* different, but only *ratione*, or as to the manner of conception. For indeed Being is the common Term of both, only with the different habitudes or respects of *Before* and *After*, which makes no substantial difference. But however this be, 'tis enough for my present purpose, that as the Creature could not Be without an Almighty Cause to produce it, and that because Existence is no part of its Essence, so neither for the very same reason can it continue in Being without the supporting Influence of the same Almighty Cause, as having still of it self, even while it is, a *Power* not to be. *Potentiam ad non esse*. Which Power would be reduced to Act if the Divine Influence did not hinder it, and so he would *actually* not be, or perish. But then it is plain that such a Being as this  
cannot

cannot be *Naturally* Immortal, as Immortal signifies *Unperishable*.

17. *Aquinas* indeed is a little nicer than ordinary upon this last Expression which I have used, concerning the Creature's having a Power to not being, even while it is; and truly as I conceive not a little nicer than he should be. He will not have it be said that the Creature has a Power in it self to not being, but that *God* has a Power by giving or with-holding his Influence either to continue or to discontinue his Being. \* *Rebus Creatis non inest Potentia ad non esse, sed Creatori inest Potentia ut eis det esse, vel eis destinat esse influere.* But with due Reverence to the Authority of this Great Man, I must crave leave to say, that I see not how this can be either true in it self, or consistent with his own avow'd Principles. Not true in it self. For since Being is not Essential to the Creature, and since as the Consequence of that, it has no Principle of necessary Existence in it self, it is plain that of it self, and as consider'd barely in it self (*Quantum est de se*) it *may* not be. And what *may* not be, has in it self a Power to not Being, that

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\* *Contra Gentiles. Lib. 2. cap. 30.*



being all that we mean by *may* not be. And indeed otherwise it would be not a contingent, but a † necessary Being, and so consequently could not be annihilated, which is contrary to the Notion of a Creature.

18. But neither is this Supposition consistent with his own *Principles*, and that even in this very Place. For here he supposes in the first place that Creatures may be *annihilated*. But now 'tis impossible for any thing to be Annihilated, that has not of it self a Power not to be, or that is not *in Potentiâ ad non esse*. For to be annihilated is to be reduced to actual not being, and 'tis impossible that any thing should actually be or not be, that was not before *in Potentiâ* to the one or to the other. Nor will it all salve the Matter to say as he does here that the Power is in the Creator, and not in the Creature; that is, that the Power that the Creature is supposed to be in as to not Being, is indeed the Power that the Creator has to annihilate him. I say this will not serve, for the Creator could not have that Power to an-

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† Because what is not possible not to be, must be necessary to be.

nihilate him which he has, unless there were also in the Creature a *Passive Power* to not being, since what has not a Power not to be, cannot possibly not be, (even as what has not a Power to be, cannot possibly be) and so is a Necessary as the other is an Impossible Being, and consequently not capable of Annihilation, as was remark'd before.

19. But then also in the second place as to the *manner* of this Annihilation, which he here rightly supposes to be effected not by any *Positive Act*, but only by the removal or withdrawing of that Influence which supports them in Being. *Desinendo eis esse influere*, as he excellently well expresses it. But then if the bare withdrawing of this Influence be enough to annihilate them, 'tis plain according to his own Concession, that their whole Dependence as to Being is upon this Influence. For as it follows the one way that if their whole dependence is upon this Influence, the bare subtraction of it will annihilate them, so it follows as well the other way, that if the bare subtraction of this Influence will annihilate them, then their whole dependence as to being is upon this Influence. And consequently they have no Natural Power of their own to persevere to be,  
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(since if they had what need they be beholden to any support without themselves) and therefore 'tis plain that *in* and *of* themselves they *may* not be, which is the very same in other words as to say that they are *in Potentiâ ad non esse*, or are in Power to not Being. And therefore *Scotus* expressly says †, *Omne aliud a Deo est in Potentiâ ad esse & ad non esse*. Wherein no doubt he is right.

20. But after all, supposing it were as this great Man will have it, *viz.* that the Creature is not in Power to not Being, any otherwise than as the Creator has a Power to annihilate it (tho' 'tis plain that one of these supposes and infers the other) yet since he grants that it may be annihilated, and that by the subtraction of the Divine Influence, this without the other is enough to answer the purpose of the present Argument, by proving the Conclusion I am now contending for, *viz.* that the Soul cannot be Naturally Immortal, as that signifies Unperishable. For that which is Naturally Unperishable is no more to be annihilated, than that which is Naturally Incorruptible is to be corrupted or dissolv'd.

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† In *Lib. 2. Sententiarum. Dist. 1. Qu. 3.*



Neither of which can be supposed without a flat Contradiction. And therefore as that which may possibly be dissolv'd cannot be said to be Naturally Incorruptible, so that which may be annihilated (whether by a Power in the Creature, or by a Power in the Creator, is not now material) cannot be said to be Naturally Unperishable. There is the same Reason for the one, as for the other.

21. I see not therefore how I can avoid concluding upon the whole, that since Being is not of the Essence of the Creature, and since in consequence of that it has not any Principle of necessary Existence in it self, but is a Being absolutely contingent both before and after its Existence, and so at any time *may* not be as well as *might* not have been, and accordingly needs the supplemental aid of the Divine Influence for its support in being, without which it could not subsist, but would immediately cease to be, as having a Power to not Being even while it is, I say I see not how I can do otherwise than conclude that a Being of this Nature and Character, and which is every way so dependent as the Soul is, tho' it has no Principle of *Corruption* in it, yet cannot be *Naturally* Immortal as that signifies *Unperishable*. The reason why she is  
so

so in the *other* Sense, is because Incorruptibility flows from her Nature. But if it did not, and she were fain to be preserv'd in it by an external Force, she could not be said to be Naturally Incorruptible. And therefore since this is the very case as to *Being*, I see not how the Immortality she has in this way can properly be said to be Natural. And I hope I shall not be thought an Opposer of any real Interest of Piety, or injurious to the Dignity of the Soul, while allowing her that Immortality which sets her above all material Beings, I deny her only that which as I humbly conceive no Creature can possibly have. For to be thus Naturally Immortal I take to be the peculiar and incommunicable Prerogative of him whose Name is *Jehova*, and whose Essence is Being ; so that in this Sense again God only must be said to *have Immortality*.

22. Not but that the Soul is really and truly Immortal even in this Sense also, that is as Immortal signifies *Unperishable*. For as nothing can any more annihilate than it can create it self, or otherwise fall into Nothing while it has the Divine Influence to support it in Being, so God willing whatever he wills to exist with infinite and unerring Wisdom, and upon the most per-

fect and comprehensive view of all the possible Consequences of such a Will, and imploying a Power no less than infinite to execute it, cannot well be conceiv'd to have any reason why he should unwill it again, so as to annihilate what he has once made by taking away that Influence of his whereby it subsists, Being being one of those Gifts of God which we may reasonably presume to be without *Repentance*. And accordingly we do not find any Instance or Example of Annihilation in any of the Works of Nature, in any Place or Part of the Creation. Nature knows no Change beyond *Corruption*, and even that is only a *modal* one. For no *Substance* of any Body hereby perishes, but only puts off its old Form or Manner, and puts on a new one. And tho' the School-Philosophy may call this a *substantial* Change, yet this is only to distinguish it from *Alteration*, which is a Change only as to Qualities, and not that they conceive any Corporeal *Substance* to be here annihilated. No, Nature continues whole and intire in all the various Revolutions and Vicissitudes which she undergoes, and tho' all things be changed, yet nothing perishes. 'Tis the *Scheme* only or Fashion of the World, not any part of the World it self, that *passes away*.  
And



And if things of a Corporeal and Corruptible Nature do not, much less shall that which is Incorruptible ever Perish.

23. But then on the other hand it seems plain, and I see not how it can be denied, that this is only a *Positive* Immortality, as not resulting from the Nature of the Soul it self, as the other sort of Immortality does (and which therefore is before made to be *Natural*) but purely from *without*, from the upholding and supporting Influence of her Creator, whereby she is enabled to subsist in that Being for which she has (and by her very needing that Influence is supposed to have) no Foundation in her own Nature. If she had, then indeed she would be naturally Immortal in this Way as well as in the Other, and then also it would be no more possible for her to be Annihilated, than it is to be Corrupted, and so she would no more need to be *preserv'd* from Perishing, than she now does to be preserv'd from Corruption or Dissolution, being *Nature-Proof* as I may say, against One as well as the Other. But the actual Case of the Soul being so far otherwise in all these Respects, I think it appears exceeding plain that the Immortality which the Soul has of this latter kind (for that she *has* it, is not here in the least Disputed) is not a Natural, but

a Positive Immortality. The only Natural Immortality that the Soul can justly be allow'd to have, is that of *Incorruption*.

24. I suppose it will not be deny'd me that the Immortality of *Adam* as to his bodily Life \* (tho' otherwise of another sort than that of the Soul) was truly and solely Positive upon the Scriptural Supposition of his needing the Tree of Life as a Remedy to preserve and defend him from actual Death. For that shews that without that Provision he must have submitted to it, having not in his own natural Constitution a sufficient Power to withstand it. Now this is the very Case of the Soul, which depends as much upon the Divine Influence to uphold and preserve it in Being, as *Adam* did upon the Fruit of that Tree to preserve him in his bodily Life. I might say a great deal more. For God might if he had so pleas'd, have given *Adam* such a Body as would always have lasted without the Assistance of that or any other foreign Remedy. But God cannot make any Creature so Independent from

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\* Because it respects the Union of two Substances, whereas the other Immortality is an Affection of one single Substance only.

himself (and 'tis a Contradiction that he should) as not to need the Support of his Almighty Arm to sustain it in Being. The Divine Influence therefore is to the Soul what the Tree of Life was to *Adam*, not to preserve her Incorruptible (for that she is of her Self and by a Foundation laid in her own Nature) but to preserve her from *not Being*, for which of her Self she is not sufficient. And therefore that in this Sense She is Immortal, is because She is *Immortalized*.

25. Not by an *Immortalizing Spirit* (for I know not well what that means) but by that common Influence of its Creator whereby all things are sustain'd in Being, and who is the true *Atlas* upon whose Almighty Arm the whole Creation rests, or as the Apostle much better expresses it, who upholds all things by the Word of his Power, and in whom we live, Move, and have our Being. We have it seems our Being not only *from* God, but also *in* him. And therefore St. *Austin* tells us expressly that the Power and Influence of the Creator is the Cause of Subsistence to every Creature. And that if this should be withdrawn, Universal Nature would sink. His Words are, \* *Creatoris Potentia, & Omnipotentis atque*

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\* *De Gen. ad lit. Lib. 4. Cap. 12.*



*omnitenentis virtus causa subsistendi est omni Creaturae. Quae virtus ab eis quae Creatae sunt regendis, si aliquando cessaret, simul & illorum cessaret Species, Omnisque Natura Consideret.* But now if as this Father says (with the common Consent of both Philosophers and School-Divines) the Power of God be the Cause of Subsistence to every Creature, then however some Created Beings by the Condition of their Nature may have the Privilege of *Incorruption*, yet it will follow that they are all upon a level in this respect, that they owe their Continuance in *Being* to the upholding Influence of the Divine Power, and so in this Sense are not Naturally, but Positively Immortal.

26. This I suppose is what would readily be acknowledged as to *Matter*, viz. that its present Continuance in Being (and there is the same Reason for its Immortality, or *uncessant* Perseverance in it) is of a *Positive* Nature. But why, if not because it needs to be upheld and preserv'd from Perishing by the Power of the Almighty, *Influencing Being to it* according to the Language of *Aquinas*. But now the Soul tho' naturally priviledged from Corruption, is yet no more *Self-subsistent* than Matter is, and needs to be supported in *Being* by the Divine Influence every whit as much, without

out which it could not subsist one Moment, much less for ever. And therefore the Case being in this respect equal (tho' otherwise very different) I see no Reason why the Immortality of the Soul in this Sense should not be as Positive as that of the most contemptible material Being in the World. And if some have thought otherwise, I suppose it may be, because proceeding upon a general Notion of the Soul's Immortality (which is undoubtedly natural in one Sense) and not sufficiently distinguishing between Immortality of *Incorruption* and Immortality of *Being*, they have ascrib'd that to the One which is true only of the Other. Which is a great Confusion, and as great a Mistake. For tho' the Incorruptibility of the Soul be a Property resulting from the Condition of her own Nature, yet her Subsistence in *Being* is not from her self, but from the Will and Power of her Creator. And therefore tho' she be naturally Immortal in the former Sense, yet 'tis plain that she can be but Positively so in the latter.

27. And if herein I say any thing more than what I have the Authority of the Schools for, I shall be found therefore only to have gone beyond them, because they have not followed themselves, in Building upon the Foundation which they have laid.

For

For I Reason all along upon their own Principles, and the Conclusion that I contend for is no other than what Necessarily follows from their own agreed Doctrine. For what good School-Divine or sound Metaphysitian is there who does not hold the Necessary and Essential Dependance of the Creature upon God in Being, not only so as that he may Annihilate it if he pleases (for of that there can be no doubt) but that he must also sustain and uphold it in Being, or else it will fall into not Being of it Self. In like manner as if I should say that the Child depends upon the Nurse in going, not only so as that she may throw it down if she pleases, (for who questions that) but so as that she must also contribute her Assistance to support and hold it up, or else it will not be able to stand. This I confess is but a faint Resemblance of our Dependance upon God, in whom we Live, Move and have our Being, but it serves well enough to illustrate the Thing, and to shew what we would have understood by it. But then if the Creature be thus *unself-subsistent*, and so dependent upon God in Being, as not to be able to subsist one Moment without his Conservative Influx, according to the express and allow'd Doctrine of St. *Austin* and the Schools, then from this Principle of theirs  
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*the Natural Immortality of the Soul. 61*

it plainly follows that the Soul tho' naturally Immortal as to Corruption, must yet be naturally Mortal as to Being at large, and that all the Immortality which she has in this kind is purely Positive. And that because it is hereby supposed to be not the Fruit of her own Nature, but the Effect of the Divine Will.

28. If it be said that the Soul has no Principle of Mortality in it self, and is not that to be Naturally Immortal? True, it is so. But that we may know in what Sense, I must distinguish the Antecedent. If by Mortality be meant Corruption, or any disposition to Corruption, so indeed it is very true that the Soul has no Principle of Mortality in it self, nor out of it self neither, and accordingly in that Sense it is readily allow'd to be Naturally Immortal. But if by Mortality be meant not Being, or any tendency or disposition to not Being, then I deny that the Soul has no Principle of Mortality in it self. For 'tis plain from the foregoing Considerations that she has, even as much as a Child has a Disposition to fall without the help of the Nurse.

29. If it be said that the Soul however is of such a Nature as to be able to subsist and continue in being, supposing God to afford it his ordinary Concurrence. It is indeed very true that it will do so, and so will

will Matter too. For even Matter as corruptible as it is will not perish, but subsist in Being as long as God is pleased to afford it his ordinary Concurrence for its Preservation. But then because it cannot subsist *without* it, this obliges us to say that it is not in its own Nature, but Positively Immortal. And the same (in this respect) must be said also as to the Soul. She has a Natural Right to Incorruption, but as to Immortality of Being, *that* Naturally belongs to him of whose Nature Being is.

30. If it be further said, that tho' the Soul exists dependently on God so as not to be able to subsist without his Influence supporting it, yet it is Nature-proof against the Assaults of any Natural Agents, so that no Creature can destroy it. I answer, that if by *destroy* it be meant Annihilate it, that indeed is very true, but no more true of the Soul than it is of Matter. For neither can any Creature annihilate that. Corruption, which is the greatest Change that Matter undergoes, does not annihilate any Part of it. So that in this respect Matter is as Immortal as the Soul. Besides that this does not prove the Soul to be Naturally Immortal absolutely speaking, but only at most *secundum quid*, or in a certain respect, not in it self, but only as to Natural Agents.

Agents. And it may be reasonably question'd whether it proves it to be *Naturally Immortal* even with respect to *them*. 'Tis true indeed that they cannot annihilate it, as the Objection rightly urges, but whether it be from any thing in its *Nature* to the contrary that they cannot (as the Objection by the word *Nature-proof* further supposes) is not so very sure. For indeed I know not but that if this Matter were more nearly inquired into, it would be found that the true reason why no Natural Agent can in this Sense destroy the Soul, is not because of any stability of Being which it has in its own Nature whereby it may resist the force of any such attempt (for the Soul is so far from having any Principle of Being in it self, that it rather Naturally tends to the contrary) but because the Power of God sustaining it being infinite, no created Force is able to overcome that Power of his whereby it is upheld in Being. And therefore so long as God shall please to continue this his Almighty Concurrence (which there is reason to think he will always do) the Soul will most certainly maintain her Being invincibly against the whole Creation. But then the Ground of this her Invincibility in Being must upon this Supposition be ascrib'd not to any peculiar Strength



Strength of her Nature (for the Case as to *Matter* is the very same) but to the Almighty Arm that supports her. But however this be, yet this as I said before would only prove that the Soul is Naturally Immortal in a certain respect, and not that she is absolutely so. But if by *destroy* be meant corrupt or dissolve it, so indeed the Soul has by the Spirituality of its Nature a Privilege above material Beings, in that it cannot be so destroy'd, as the other can. But then 'tis to be attended that this gives the Soul no other Natural Immortality than that of *Incorruption*, which is that very Natural Immortality which we have been all along contending for, as the only one which the Soul can possibly have. For as for Immortality of *Being*, since it has that not from it Self, but from the Powerful Influence that sustains it, 'tis plain that *this* her Immortality is as Positive as the Other is Natural. Nor does it prove this Kind of Immortality to be Natural to the Soul because she has it from the very beginning of her Existence, and is as I may say Created in it. For not every thing that belongs to a thing from the Beginning of it is therefore *Natural* to it, unless it necessarily follows the Principles of its Nature. For otherwise we shall be oblig'd to say that  
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the Union of the Human Nature to a Divine Person was Natural to the Man Christ Jesus, it being certain that his Human Nature never existed without being united to the Divine, since otherwise the Word would have assumed not a *Nature*, but a *Person*, which no Sound Divinity can allow. It is therefore no Reason why we should *Naturalize* this sort of Immortality to the Soul, to say that it began, and always Coexisted with her. For *Grace* tho' in Nature Posteriour, may yet in Time be Coeval or Coexistent with Nature, according to that of *St. Austin* concerning the Angels (whom he supposes to be Created in Grace) \* *Simul in eis & Condens Naturam, & largiens Gratiam*. Whether the Angels were Created in Grace or no is a Question more easy to Dispute than determine, but however it be in Fact, it is enough to the present purpose that the Notion it self is consistent, Grace being never the less Grace for being Coexistent with Nature. For which we need go no further than the fore-mention'd Instance of the Union of the Divine Nature to the Human, which tho' Coexistent with it, was yet the greatest Grace that ever was bestow'd upon it.

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\* *De Civ. Dei. Lib. 12. Cap. 9.*

31. Concerning this Positive Immortality as to Being I should interpret that celebrated place in *Plato* \* so often alledg'd by Learned Men, where he represents the Inferiour Gods as depending upon the Supreme, and introduces the Father of the Gods thus bespeaking them. *Ὁς ἐστίν, &c. Ye Gods whose Original is from Gods, of whom I am the Maker and the Father, those things which are made are by my Will indissoluble. For whatever is bound, is of it self Solvible. But it would be an ill thing to be willing to dissolve that which is well Constituted. Wherefore because you are made, you are therefore not Immortal, nor altogether Indissoluble. Yet you shall not be Dissolv'd nor undergo the Fate of Death, as partaking of my Will; which is a greater and more effectual Bond than those by which you were Bound together when you were made. The sum of which is, that tho' they were Mortal by Nature, yet they were Immortal by his Will and Pleasure. Now this I say I should interpret of the Natural Mortality and Positive Immortality of Created Spirits as to Being, were it not that the Words *λύειν* and *ἀλύτῃ* solvible and insolvible whereby he expresses their Mortality and Immortality will not*

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\* In *Timao*. p. 1054. Edit. *Marsilii Ficini*.



Comport with it, as not implying Mortality or Immortality of *Being*, but such only as respects *Corruption*, and consequently not applicable to pure Spirits, but only to Bodies, or at least imbody'd Spirits. For indeed it is not true, nor can be Philosophically said of a pure Spirit that it is Solvible by Nature, and made Indissoluble by Will. And therefore what to make of this Passage I cannot well tell, unless by the Dissolution here spoken of the Philosopher means that of Death properly speaking, whereby these Demons might be separated from their Material Vehicles, or that their very Material Vehicles might have their Parts dissolv'd according to the Conjecture of the Learned Person upon whose Occasion I write this. But indeed setting aside those Terms of *Solvible* and *Insolvible* which are of a Corporeal Importance, this had been a very fit Representation of the Dependency of the Soul upon the Father of Spirits, and the Fountain of all Being. But as it stands I know not well what to make of it.

32. But to proceed to something which we may hope better to understand; in persuance of the Principles here laid down I am further led to observe that all the Arguments which have been hitherto offer'd to prove the Natural Immortality of the

Soul, however they may have been design'd, or how far so ever meant to extend, will yet be found to conclude for no other Natural Immortality of the Soul than only that of *Incorruption*. That Argument for instance which is taken from its *Immateriality*, which is the great Argument that is generally insisted upon (especially by the *Cartesians*) whereby to prove its Natural Immortality. But what Natural Immortality does it prove? The Soul is Immaterial, therefore it is Immortal, very right if by Immortal you mean *Incorruptible*, nothing being more plain than that what has no Composition of Parts, can be divided or dissolved into none. But if by Immortal you mean Unperishable, or that has naturally a perpetuity of Subsistence, where is the Consequence?

33. For in the first place does it follow that because the Soul is Immaterial therefore it is Immortal *Absolutely*? Indeed if we could conceive no other Death of the Soul, or if nothing else were call'd by that Name, but only *Corruption*, the consequence might be good, because that would certainly be excluded by it, and so if that were *all*, then all Mortality would be excluded. But this is not the Case. There is another and much more fatal and killing Death than  
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that of Corruption, viz. a total Cessation from *Being*. And does the Immateriality of the Soul prove its Immortality as to *that*? 'Tis plain that it does not *Immediately*, or by it Self, there being no manner of Connexion between the two Ideas of *Immateriality* and Immortality of *Being*, an Immaterial Being being as liable to Annihilation as a Material One, which could not be, if there were a necessary Connexion between Immateriality and Immortality of Being. All the Question then will be whether it proves it by the *Other*, that is, whether it proves the Soul Immortal as to Being, by proving it Immortal as to *Corruption*. But 'tis plain again that there is no more Connexion between *Incorruptibility* and Immortality of Being, than there is between *Immateriality* and Immortality of Being, and consequently Immateriality by proving the Soul Incorruptible, does not not prove it to be in that Sense Immortal. Much less can it prove it to be Absolutely so. For it does not follow that because the Soul is Immortal in a certain respect, therefore it is so Absolutely. Or that because it cannot Die after a certain particular manner, therefore it cannot Die, which is no Consequence, this being to argue from a particular to a general *Negatively*, as if I should



say, This is not a Triangle, therefore it is not a Figure. Which is as inconsequent as if I should argue from a general to a particular *Affirmatively*, This is a Figure, therefore a Triangle. Whereby it is plain, that the Immateriality of the Soul, by proving its Immortality as to Corruption, does not prove its Immortality as to Being, unless there were a Connexion between Incorruptibility, and that, which plainly appears to be none at all. The Argument therefore taken from the Immateriality of the Soul, tho it be commonly brought to prove its Immortality at large, will yet be found to prove only its Immortality as to Corruption, and not as to Being. Nor can any Argument drawn from the Nature of the thing prove *that*, because in that Sense as we have shewn, the Soul is not Naturally but Positively Immortal. And that which is not, cannot be proved.

34. But yet after all, tho the Argument of Immateriality proves no other Immortality of the Soul than that of Incorruption, and tho that be also the only natural Immortality which the Soul has or can have, yet I shall here take occasion to add this further Observation as to the other sort of Immortality, that of *Being*, that the Soul may be also in that Sense Immortal, notwithstanding

notwithstanding any Effect that its Separation from the *Body* can have to the contrary. For tho the Soul essentially depends upon God as to its support in Being according to the Principles upon which this Discourse proceeds, yet there is no reason to suppose that it should have any such dependance upon the *Body*, or indeed upon any other Creature, and consequently its separation from the *Body* can signifie nothing as to its cessation from Being, supposing (as we here do) Soul and *Body* to be two distinct Substances. And that tho we should even suppose this Distinction to be only *Numerical*. For Substances being such things as subsist in themselves, without depending upon any thing else as on a *Subject*, in opposition to *Modalities* or *Accidents*, which are only Beings of Beings, or whose Being (as the Schools say) is their Inherence, 'tis plain that the Destruction or even Annihilation of one cannot contribute to the Annihilation of the other, and so consequently the destruction of the *Body* cannot at all affect the Soul as to its Life or Being. But then 'tis to be considered, that this does not prove that the Soul is Immortal absolutely speaking, but only that is so as to any necessary dependence it has upon the *Body*. Not

that nothing can annihilate it, but only that separation from the *Body* cannot do it. Which he that denies the Immortality of the Soul, may grant, as well as he that affirms it.

35. The like Observation is to be made upon that so much talk'd of privilege of the Soul in being undestroyable by any *Creature*, or natural Agent. I shall not deny, nor so much as dispute her Right to this Privilege, but leave her in the full and quiet possession of it, supposing that the Soul tho not naturally Immortal as to Being, does yet no more depend upon other Creatures, than upon her own Body, but is intirely placed above their reach. They cannot destroy her as that signifies Corruption, because she is in her own Nature Incorruptible. Neither can they destroy her as that imports Annihilation, because the Soul does not depend upon any of her Fellow-Creatures as to Being, but only upon him who is both the Fountain and the Stay of it. So that the Soul is every way unobnoxious to the Power of Creatures, and may securely bid defiance to all their Assaults, tho the Confederate Force of the whole Creation were in Arms against her. But then this will not serve, nor ought to be used as an Argument to  
prove



prove the Natural Immortality of the Soul, as to Being absolutely speaking, but only in a certain limited respect, *viz.* as to any *Creaturely dependence*. But in this sense matter is every whit as Immortal as the Soul (which has not this Immortality as a Spirit, but only as a substance at large) as being not annihilable by any Creature any more than the Soul is, and what will always continue in Being, supposing God not to withdraw from it that conservative Influence of his whereby it subsists. Which is as much as can be said of the Soul, or the most glorious Angel in Heaven. And if upon this it should be ask'd, what Privilege then has the Soul above Matter, the Answer upon the foregoing Principles is both clear and obvious, that Matter is *Naturally Corruptible* as well as *Annihilable*, whereas the Soul is only the *latter*.

36. If any should think (as perhaps they may) that in this way of stating the Immortality of the Soul, I do not allow her Immortality enough, I desire that after they have again weigh'd both the thing it self, and the Account here given of it, they would attentively and distinctly consider what it is they would further have. I grant the Soul to be *Naturally Incorruptible*, and accordingly to be *Naturally Immortal*

mortal as that signifies *Incorruptible*. And that not only with respect to this or that Cause, or Agent, but simply and absolutely, so as not to admit of any Dissolution by any Means or Power whatsoever. And this gives her a Privilege above all Material Beings, and fixes a great and distinguishing Gulph between her and them, which are all absolutely Corruptible in their own Natures, tho' not always to this or that particular Agent. But then indeed as to the other sort of Immortality, that of *Being*, tho' I cannot allow this to be Natural to the Soul, as not having the Principle or Foundation of it in her Nature, and as consequently needing the constant Influence of her Creator to uphold her in it, yet I allow her actually and in Fact to be so far partaker even of this Immortality, as that she will ever continue in Being however Naturally defectible, supposing God to continue his Conservative Influence to her, which as I also observe there is no reason to think he will ever withdraw. But then as this Immortality is not Natural, so neither is it proper or peculiar to the Soul, being common to it with Material Beings, from which the only Immortality that distinguishes her is as I take it, that of *Incorruption*.

37. And

37. And indeed this is the most dangerous side of the Soul's Immortality, that which is most likely to come under dispute with Infidels, or to be denied by them, and so is of the greatest Consequence to be either proved or acknowledged. For this being once granted, there will be hardly any Demurr upon the other, Annihilation being what there is no reason for, or example of. And I believe there are not many Instances to be given of Philosophical Men who after they had got over the Corruptibility of the Soul would stick at its Annihilation. The stress of the Question lies chiefly on the other side, whether the Soul be indeed Corruptible or no. And accordingly it has all along been the Philosophy of Atheism or Libertinism at least to represent the Soul as a Corruptible Being, chusing by that to express its supposed, shall I say, or rather wish'd for Mortality. So they in the Book of Wisdom, Chap. 2. v. 2. *The Breath in our Nostrils is as Smoak, and a little Spark in the moving of our Heart. Which being extinguish'd, our Body shall be turn'd into Ashes, and our Spirit shall vanish as the soft Air.* That is, dissolve and be dispersed till the Parts of it become insensible, for that's properly to *vanish*. And so  
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in like manner the Epicurean Poet comparing the Corruption of the Soul to the diffuency or running abroad of Water in a shatter'd or broken Vessel,

*\* Crede animam quòq; diffundi, multòq; perire  
Ociùs, et citius dissolvi corpora prima  
Cum semel omnibus e Membris ablata recessit.*

And again, says he,

*Ergo dissolvi quòque convenit omnem Animai  
Naturam, cen Fumus in altis Aeris Auras.*

Again,

*Dilaniata foras dispergitur —*

To the like purpose is that of Ovid concerning the Translation of the Soul of *Julius Caesar*, which he supposed to be in its own Nature liable to dissolution, but only preserv'd from it by the kind interposition of *Venus*.

—— *Mediâ cum sede Senatus  
Constitit alma Venus, nulli cernenda, suique*

*\* De rerum natura. Lib. 3.*

*Cæsaris eripuit Membris, nec in Aera solvi  
Passa recentem Animam, Cælestibus intulit  
(Astris.*

This 'tis to be the Favourite of a Goddess, or rather of a good Poet, who by giving us here an Instance of a Positive Incorruption, plainly implies the Natural State of the Soul to be no better than Corruptible. These Passages are not like that of \*Homer concerning *Pandarus* when slain by *Diomedes*, that his Soul and his Strength were dissolv'd,

— τὸ αὖτις λυθὲν ψυχὴν τε μὶν ὅ τε

because of the uncertain signification of the word *ψυχὴ*, by which he may mean no more than his Bodily Life, tho 'tis certain that elsewhere he uses the same word for the Soul it self properly so call'd as distinct from the Body, for which we need go no further than the 3d Verse of his first *Iliad*, where he speaks of the Souls of *Hero's* being sent to *Hades*. But however there is no necessity of his using it so here, and I the rather think he does not, because such a dissolution of the Soul would be inconsistent with the Translation of it to *Hades*, as indeed with the very notion of

of *Hades* it self. But as to the other Passages, 'tis plain that they must be understood of the very Dissolution of the Soul strictly taken, and as distinguish'd from the Body. Which they took the Soul to be, no otherwise than by the greater Subtility and Fineness of its Contexture, conceiving it to be indeed of a Corporeal Nature, and so consequently liable to Corruption.

This therefore being that side on which the Immortality of the Soul lies most open and is chiefly attack'd, as we are chiefly concern'd to secure it, so allowing as I do the Soul to be naturally Immortal in this respect, and allowing it also to *have* the other sort of Immortality, tho' not in a natural but in a positive way, I hope I shall not appear injurious to the Dignity of the Soul, or justly chargeable with any Deficiency in the Account here given of her Immortality. For in short I see not what I can further add to it, having already allowed her all the Immortality that any Creature is capable of. And more would but betray and expose the Cause which we are concern'd to defend.

38. For after all in stating the Immortality of the Soul this Measure I think is to be observ'd, that as it is to be set above that of Material Beings, so it ought to be set



set below that of God, whose Immortality as well as other Perfections tho' in some degree it may be imitated, can yet never be equall'd by his Creatures, which yet would unavoidably be, should we make the Immortality of the Soul as to *Being* to be natural in like manner as we do as to *Incorruption*. For then the Soul would be thus Immortal of it self, and by Vertue of its own Nature, which is the very Immortality of God. Nor could this be evaded here as in the other Case by the help of that *Consequential* Sense before spoken of, that is, that as the Soul supposing it to be put in *Being* becomes then in consequence of its proper Nature Incorruptible, tho' Absolutely speaking it might be neither one nor t'other, so in like manner supposing the Soul to exist it would be naturally Immortal as to *Being*, tho' here also Absolutely speaking it might be neither. No, this will not do. For *Being* is here it self the very Immortality supposed, the very Property affirm'd of the Subject, and if this be Natural to the Soul, then it could not *not be*, and so the supposition of its not being would thereby be excluded, or rather prevented. And so the Soul would be a necessary and Self-subsistent Being, as having *Being* Essentially belonging to it, and flowing  
ing

ing from its very Nature, and consequently it would be impossible to distinguish the Immortality of the Soul from that of God, who only as the Apostle tells us has Immortality. Whereby he supposes at least a *Difference*, which in the way that we have here taken, supposing the Soul to be Positively Immortal as to Being, tho' naturally so as to Incorruption, appears to be very plain. Tho' I hope before I have done to make it yet plainer.

39. To these Physical Considerations I shall take leave to Subjoin one Moral one, which is that this way of Stating the Immortality of the Soul, is very much for the Advantage of *Humility*, as adjusting all things with a due Temper, without running up too high or sinking too low, and rendering both to God and the Creature their proper and just Rights. For by this tho' the Soul is raised above all material Beings, by the Privilege of Natural Incorruptibility whereof they are not capable, yet it is not elevated to that Degree as to be exalted into the Throne of God, so as to Communicate with him in that which is his great and incommunicable Prerogative, to be naturally Immortal as to *Being*, or which is all one, to have Being flow from his own Nature or Essence. No, God alone

alone is placed upon this his *Throne* of incommunicable Power and Majesty, who is the Blessed and only Potentate, and who in this Sense *only has Immortality*. And the Soul with all other Creatures whether of the Material or of the Intellectual World, must be contented to sit together at his *Footstool*, and there at an awful and humble Distance to receive the free Emissions of his invivifying Influence, and as to *Being* to enjoy an Immortality that is purely Derivative, Positive, and Dependent. And indeed she need not be naturally Immortal *here* to be distinguish'd from, or to have a Preference above either her own or other Bodies, as having both Distinction and Preference enough above them all without it, whom she excels in the whole kind of her Being, and by a Privilege which they can never have, and she can never lose. But if the Soul should be tempted to grow vain upon the Privilege she has above the material Part of the Creation in being by Nature Incorruptible, she may quickly prick the Bladder of her Pride by turning her view upon the other side of her Immortality, by considering what a Precarious Tenure she has of it, as having no Self-Substance of her own, but depending upon the Will and Pleasure of her Creator for every Moment of her Duration. And



indeed what Pride can resist this Argument, or what Excellencies or Perfections are those which we may reasonably be Proud of, when even our very *Being* the Foundation of them all, is so very Positive and Precarious.

40. And now if I have put these things in a better Light than wherein I found them, 'tis in a great Measure owing to the Fundamental Distinction I have here used of Immortality, *viz.* that of *Incorruption* and that of *Being*, the necessity of which upon a little Consideration of the Subject of the present Discourse I quickly found, and that there was no thinking or talking intelligibly or with any consistence about what we have in Hand without it. For the Immortality of the Soul at large is too wide and loose a thing to have any thing very particularly or distinctly said of it, much more to be affirm'd to be either *Natural* or *Positive*, since (as appears) it may be one or the other according as it is understood. And tho' I will not pretend by the help of this Distinction to have given so clear an Account of this Matter as might be desired, yet I am inclined to be a little confident that for want of it those that have treated of the Immortality of the Soul (tho' otherwise Men of great Thought) have yet run into strange Confusion. As when a great School-

Schoolman proving the Incorruptibility of the Soul as being *Forma per se subsistens*, says, that Matter is Corrupted by the separation of the Form from it. But that 'tis impossible that the Form should be separated from it self. And therefore 'tis impossible that a subsisting Form should cease to be *desinat esse*. Here seems to be a plain confusion of Immortality of Incorruption with Immortality as to Being, since instead of saying it is impossible such a Form should cease to be, he should have said it is impossible it should be *Corrupted*, which was the thing he was proving of the Soul, and the only thing which could be proved by that Argument. The like Confusion he seems guilty of when he proves the Soul to be Incorruptible, because Being belongs to it *per se* (that is, not as in a Subject, after the manner of accidental Forms) as if Being and Incorruption, or not to be and to be Corrupted were one and the same thing. So again another great Man in the Scholastic way, tho' not one of them we strictly call Schoolmen, speaking of some who hold the Soul to be Corruptible in it self, but that it shall last for ever in Vertue of the Divine Conservation (where by the way there is the same mistake committed by putting Mortality of Corruption for Mortality as to Being) says he, if one should

ask them why the Soul is Corruptible in it self, they Answer, for this Reason because if God should cease from that Act whereby he conserves them, they would immediately return to nothing. Now here is the same confusion again either in the Author of those whose Opinion he represents, or rather in both, because he lets it pass without any Censure, when at the same time he applies an Answer to it in another respect; I say here is the same confusion in putting naturally Corruptible instead of naturally Perishable, or Mortality of Corruption instead of Mortality of Being. The Soul would return to nothing if God did not uphold it in Being, therefore it is *Corruptible* in it Self. Does that follow? Is it an Argument that the Soul is in it self or naturally *Corruptible* because it depends upon God for its Conservation as to *Being*? Or if God suppose should cease from that his Conservative Act whereby it subsists, would that *Corrupt* the Soul? What *Corrupt* that which is Immaterial, and so naturally incorruptible? But it would *Annihilate* it. True. But what is that to *Corruption*? It proves indeed that what is so dependent upon the Divine Influence as to return to nothing upon the Cessation of it is naturally Perishable or Mortal as to *Being*, but so a thing may be without being *Corruptible*,  
nor



nor does that prove it to be so, as being an Argument that passes from one kind wholly to another. So that 'tis plain that Mortality of Corruption is here again confounded with Mortality as to Being, Corruptible being here put instead of Perishable. So again we have another great Man expressing himself after this manner. *That which does not depend upon Matter, that which is Simple, nor has any Principle of Corruption in it self, to which nothing is contrary, nor has any Parts into which it may be dissolv'd, that certainly is naturally (ex natura sua) incorruptible.* Well, so far 'tis very right. But he presently flies off again by immediately adding, *neither does it need any thing else that it may remain, but only the constant Influence or Conservation of God.* That it may remain, that is that it may remain in Being, for that is it to which the Divine Conservation tends. But how comes *that* in? was he not concluding the Soul's Incorruptibility, and why then does he fly off to *Being*? But besides does the Soul need the Divine Influence to preserve it *Incorruptible*? To preserve it in Being indeed it does, but not sure to preserve it Incorruptible, it being so in its own Nature, as he himself contends. So that here is a confus'd Jumble between Incorruption and Being, that being said of One which is  
true

true only of the Other. Again, says he by way of Confirmation of this Argument, *No body perishes, tho' it be never so much lessen'd by Division, and puts on divers Forms. Much less then shall a Spiritual substance be destroy'd, which has no Parts into which it may be dissolv'd.* Here again the same Confusion seems committed, because he argues from the Immortality of Bodies as to *Being*, to the Immortality of the Soul as to *Corruption*, as if Being and Incorruption were the same thing. And by this the Reader may have a Taste of the Confusion that has been in this Matter, and all for want of I will not say knowing, but heeding and attending to this necessary, and in all Discourse about the Soul's Immortality, Fundamental Distinction.

41. But not to insist upon particular Expressions relating to this matter, even the Account that's given of it in general is very confuse. It is said that the Soul is Immortal in as much as it cannot be destroy'd by any Physical Action, or by the force of any Creature. But in the first place whatever they mean by *destroy'd*, this does not prove any Immortality of the Soul simply, but only as to Creatures, that *they* cannot destroy it. Whereas there is a certain Natural Immortality belonging to

to the Soul without any respect to that limitation. But if by destroy they mean *Corrupt*, that indeed is very true, and a good reason why, because the Soul is in it self incorruptible. But then again this does not prove the Immortality of the Soul at large, but only as to *Corruption*, which is the least part of Mortality. Nor again does it prove *that* absolutely, but only as to *Creatures*. Which is again a very improper limitation. For this implies as if the Soul were in its own Nature Corruptible, tho *Creatures* could not corrupt it, whereas the Soul is Naturally, and consequently absolutely Incorruptible. But if by *destroy*, they mean Annihilate, this also is in it self very true, and indeed more consistently said than the other, the limitation here by *Creatures* being very proper, as supposing the Soul to be in it self annihilable, tho not by *them*. Which is very right, whereas that limitation before was all over impertinent. But then besides that this does not offer to prove the Immortality of the Soul at large, but only as to *Being*, nor that absolutely, but only as to *Creatures*, 'tis also further to be consider'd, that this confers no Priviledge upon the Soul but what is common to all Material Beings, who can no more be Annihilated by  
Creatures



Creatures than the Soul it self. For one Creature cannot annihilate another, Annihilation being as much above the Power of any Creature, as Creation it self is. This therefore does not at all divide the Intellectual from the Material World, or distinguish the Soul from any one Creature in it, since in this sense they are all as Immortal and undestroyable as her self.

42. But perhaps it is the other sense of *destroy* that distinguishes them. That indeed would a little mend the matter, but I doubt we shall be disappointed here too. For taking Destroy for Corrupt (which indeed is the most proper sense of it) what is it that is then said of the Soul? Why that it cannot be corrupted by Creatures. True. But then as I observ'd before, this implies that Souls are in themselves Corruptible, and therefore so far at least they are again set upon a level with Bodies. And if the limitation *by Creatures* should be thought to make any difference, may we not suppose Bodies, which tho' absolutely Corruptible, are yet either by their excessive smallness, as in some conceivable Divisions of quantity, or by the firmness and compactness of their Parts, or some other way, not to be corrupted by any Physical Action? Does not their own Philosophy

Philosophy assure us, that the *Celestial* Bodies are at least such (if not absolutely incorruptible) and does not the Christian Faith teach us to expect such Bodies at the Resurrection? As for the *Celestial* Bodies, there is a \* Philosopher of their own that expresses their Incorruptibility in the very same manner as that of the Soul is here express'd, supposing that by its undestroyableness by Creatures they mean that it cannot be corrupted by them. He tells us, that the Heavens are by their Nature incorruptible, and gives this reason for it, because the form of every Heaven is such, that it cannot be separated from its Subject by the force of any Natural Agent. *Quia nempe Forma cujusque Cœli est ejusmodi, ut nullius Agentis Naturalis vi a subiecto avelli possit.* Now this is the very Immortality that is here supposed to be given to the Soul, so far I mean as respects the power of Natural Agents, which it seems have as much power over the Soul as they have over the *Celestial* Bodies, whose Nature however these Men may be supposed to mistake, yet thus it is upon the Principles of their own Philosophy. And however

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\* Eufrachius a S. Paulo.

it may be in the thing it self, I mean as to the real Nature of those Heavenly Bodies (which I pretend not to know) yet I presume it will not be denied, that God is able by that Almighty Power whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself, to make a Body of such a temper as not to be corrupted by any Natural Force, there being no contradiction in the thing. Indeed for a Body to be absolutely Incorruptible is a contradiction, as much as for a Spirit to be Naturally Corruptible, but that there may be a Body so temper'd as to be Incorruptible as to Natural Agents is no contradiction. And I presume they will not deny but that the now glorif'd Body of Christ is actually such, and since our Bodies as the Apostle tells us are to be conformable to his, there seems as little reason to question but that ours shall be so too. And how then is the Soul even in this way distinguish'd from Bodies, or what priviledge has she more than they either have, or at least *may* have? So then according to this account of the Soul's Immortality, whether we take it in the way of Corruption or in the way of Annihilation, it has neither way any necessary Priviledge or Distinction above Material Beings. And yet it is intended to be distinguish'd



guish'd by it. And accordingly we are told by an Eminent \*Metaphysician, that when Philosophers and <sup>\* Baronius</sup> Divines divide Substances into Eternal and Mortal (his word is *Caducas*) their meaning is, that there are some Substances which cannot be destroy'd by any Creature. So every way confused and faulty is this Account which characterizes the Souls Immortality by its not being to be destroy'd by Creatures. Indeed it is so very confused and intricate, that its very obscurity is almost its protection, it being not very easie to disintangle and unravel it. Which perhaps may be one reason why it has pass'd for current so long.

43. If it be ask'd, since you find fault with this Account as so confuse and defective, what then *should* they say to express the Immortality of the Soul? I answer that indeed I do not see how they can say any thing about it, till they first distinguish the ambiguity, and define what they mean by *Immortality*. And 'tis Mens proceeding to the definition of the thing, before they have well clear'd and settled that of the Name, that runs them into such error and confusion as they are generally guilty of, even in such Theories as both *need* and *deserve* more attentive consideration. For if Men do not know *whereof* it is that

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they

they affirm, 'tis no wonder if they should as little know *what it is that they say*. And this I take to be the Reason why the Account that is ordinarily given of the Immortality of the Soul is no clearer, nor no more consistent than it is. But no sooner is the precise and exact signification of Immortality according to the two premised senses of it defined, but it very clearly appears what ought to be said in this matter: *viz.* That as Immortality signifies Incorruptibility, so the Soul is Naturally and Absolutely Immortal, and not only with respect to Creatures, which is an impertinent limitation that serves only to darken and confound the matter. But as Immortality signifies indefectibility in Being, that so the Soul is not Naturally, but positively Immortal. And this I take to be clear as to the meaning, but whether True or no, depends upon the foregoing Considerations. Wherein as the Immortality of the Soul is set high enough to serve any interest of Religion, so no lower than is necessary for the glorification of God, and the confession of our own Infirmary.

44. And now upon these Principles we may hope clearly and distinctly to understand and explain the exact difference between

tween God's Immortality and that of the Soul. That there is a Difference the Apostle plainly intimates, in those forecited Words of his, *who only has Immortality*. The word he uses is *ἀθάνατος*, Immortality, and not *ἀσάπτωτος*, Incorruption, as elsewhere. Between which two there is a great deal of difference, the latter being more limited, as a certain specification of the Former, which signifying Immortality at large comprehends in the generality of it both that of *Incorruption* and that of *Being* too. So that there is all the Immortality that can be. And all this he ascribes *only* to God as the sole Possessor of it. Not that the Apostle was unacquainted with the Philosophy of the Soul's Immortality, or intended hereby to insinuate any thing against the Truth of it as a Christian Doctrine, since then he would be inconsistent with himself in subverting that Faith which he professedly maintain'd, and whereof *that* and the Doctrine of the *Resurrection* were the two great Foundations. And therefore as on the one hand he cannot be understood to speak exclusively, as if God were the only Being that had any Immortality truly belonging to him, so on the other hand he must by that exclusive Particle be supposed to intend



a *Difference*, or else he says nothing. And not only so, but a great difference too, as if our Immortality tho truly and really such in its measure and proportion, were yet compared to that which God has, as none at all. So that he may be said *only* to have Immortality, as if there were nothing Immortal besides himself. In like manner as the Metaphysitians say of *Being*, that it is not univocal to God and the Creature, as not equally agreeing in the common reason of it, which is found in God after a more excellent and eminent manner than can consist with the notion of a Creature. Upon which account God may be said to have *Being only*, as well as Immortality, and the Creatures not to be even while they are. According to that of St. *Austin* upon the Name which God assumes to himself, *I am.* \* *Tanquam in ejus Comparatione qui verè est, quia incommutabilis est, ea quæ mutabilia facta sunt, non sint.* So that we must suppose a great difference between God and our selves, as to Immortality as well as to *Being*. But *how*, is the Question.

45. Now to this the common Answer as I take it is to this effect, that God is said

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\* *De Civ. Dei. Lib. 8. c. 11.*

to be only Immortal, as being Originally, Essentially and Independently so, &c. But so *what*? That we are left to make out as well as we can. This Account therefore tho' true, is yet too general, as Swimming upon the Surface of Immortality at large, without entring into the Speciality of the thing. More distinctly therefore, since God is a Spirit as our Saviour tells us, he must in the first place as such be naturally *Incorruptible*. And since again he is a Spirit to whom *Being* is *Essential*, or whose very Essence or nature is to Be, and consequently a necessary Being, 'tis plain in the next place that he must needs be as naturally *unperishable*. And so God is Naturally Immortal both ways, both as to *Incorruptibility*, and as to *Being*. And accordingly 'tis observable that the Apostle expresses it both ways. For not contenting himself with the general Name of *Aθανασία* before used, he more particularly Specializes his Immortality by the words \* *ἀφθαρτος* and *αἰώνιος*, calling him the King Eternal, Immortal, or as it is in the Greek, the Incorruptible King of Ages. And elsewhere he gives him the express Title of † *αἰώνιος*, calling him the eternal or ever-

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\* 1 Tim. 1. 17. † Rom. 16. 26.

lasting, or as the word more strictly signifies, *always being God*. For 'tis *always* *quasi* *in*. So then God is naturally Immortal both ways, both as to Incorruption, and as to Being too. Whereas our Souls are naturally Immortal only one way, *viz.* as to *Incorruption*. And this is the first instance of the Difference. And a very great, as well as clear one.

46. Then again secondly, as to *Incorruption*, which is our only Natural and distinguishing Immortality, we are neither this way Immortal as God is. For tho' the Soul as a Spirit must be allowed to be naturally Incorruptible, yet this is to be understood only according to that *Posterior* or *Consequential* Sense before insisted upon, which commences from the Constitution of things, antecedently to which even this natural Immortality (as indeed all things belonging to the Creature) is truly Positive. My meaning more distinctly is, that tho' supposing the Soul to be put in Being, or to have actual Existence, that then Incorruptibility will be the natural and necessary Consequence, or if you will *Property* of such a Being, yet since it might not have been at all, as having no Principle of Being in it Self, and the Property that follows the Nature can have no better Establish



Establishment than the Nature it self whose Property it is, it will be true to say that as it might not have been, so it might not have been Incorruptible neither. And so even this Immortality of the Soul will be absolutely and antecedently Positive, tho' upon *Supposition* Natural and Necessary. But now God having Being for his very Essence, and consequently being as necessary to Be as he is to be Incorruptible supposing that he is, it follows that he is Naturally Incorruptible after another manner than we are, not upon *Supposition* only, but in the most absolute, most intire, and most unlimited sense that can be conceiv'd. Which again makes a vast difference between his Immortality and ours, even as much as there is between a thing that is absolutely necessary, and a thing that is so only upon *Supposition*.

47. To this perhaps it might be further added, that tho' the Soul be truly and strictly Incorruptible, as to any dissolution or separation of Parts, in opposition to corporeal Beings, yet still in every *Change* there is a sort of Corruption, or at least something that carries some Resemblance or Proportion to it, since what ever is changed, does as such cease to be what it was before. And therefore that only

may be said to be eminently and transcendently Incorruptible which is perfectly *Immutable*. Such as God, and God only is, in whom as St. James says *there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning*, and so not so much as a shadow of *Corruption*. This I say might be added for the further Illustration of the Excellency of God's Immortality above ours, but 'tis a consideration that goes beyond the Principles of the present Discourse, and there is otherwise no need of it, the thing being sufficiently plain without it, and therefore I shall not enlarge upon the matter.

48. I shall only further observe, that the Apostle bestows upon God the Title of *Only-Wise*, as well as only Immortal, and it will appear the less strange that God's *Immortality* should so far differ from and exceed ours, if we reflect how much his *Wisdom* does. His Wisdom is *Infinite* as the Psalmist says, *Psal. 148*. whereas ours has not only Bounds, but those too very narrow ones, the things which we know not, vastly exceeding those which we know. And as God's Wisdom is Infinite, so it is a most *perfect* and *universal* Wisdom, without any mixture of either Ignorance or Error. He knows things possible and things actual, things present and things future, things

things that absolutely *will* be, and things that upon supposition *would* be, yea and calls the things that are not as tho' they were. He has no cloud upon his mind, nor so much as Mote in his Eye, as being that *pure Light* in which there is no Darknes at all. Whereas our very Light is Darkness, and our brightest Wisdom has its dark Sides, its Defects and its Mixtures, and no wonder, since even the Angels who are so much wiser than we, are yet chargeable with Folly. Again, God's Wisdom is an *immutable* and *indefectible* Wisdom: 'Tis a Sun that knows no *Tropics*, and that never goes down, but always shines with an equally clear and uniform Light. His Wisdom is one standing *now* as his Eternity is, without Succession or new Acquisition, without Addition or Diminution, without Increase or Decrease, without Improvement or Decay, without variety or alteration, and so without *End* as well as without *Beginning*. Whereas our little Wisdom is as variable and as diverse as the Moon, tho' not so regular in its Changes. I had almost said as variable as our *Wills*, than which nothing is more inconstant. We are Wise to day, and Fools to morrow, wise in little things, and Fools in great. Our Light goes out, and then we *Sin*, it



rekindles again, and then we *repent*. That very Time that ripens our Wisdom decays it too. When we are young we are not arrived to our Wisdom, and when we grow old we outlive it. And that little clear Interval that is between the Incogitancy of Childhood, and the Dotage of Old-Age is liable to a Thousand Contingencies. And by that time the Sun has clear'd the Mists, it often sets. Besides God's Wisdom is *Original*, and springs from himself. He is self-wise, as well as self-existent, and shines by a proper, and not by a *borrowed* Light. He travels not out of himself in the search of Wisdom, any more than in the search of *Happiness*, but is wise from himself, as well as happy in himself. Nor does he travel *within* himself for it neither. For his Wisdom is not the Birth of Study, nor the Fruit of Experience, nor the result of Meditation, nor from any cultivation of Art, but of a Natural and Spontaneous Growth. He does not so much as *make himself* wise, but his Wisdom rises from his Nature as from a Spring. Much less does he receive Disciplin or Instruction from any *other* (for who has been his Counsellour) but his Wisdom is congenial to him, and he possesses it intirely of his own, and of his Fullness we all receive. Whereas what we call our Wisdom is but a *Derivative* thing,  
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acquired by Study and Institution, by time and observation, by Men and by Books, by Schools and Academies, by the Disciplin of others, and by our own private Reflection, besides the irradiations which we receive from above, from the Father of Lights, with whom Wisdom dwells, and from whom it descends.

Add to all this that God is *necessarily* wise. Wisdom is both essential to him, and inseparable from him. It was possess'd by him in the beginning of his ways, *Prov.* 8. and he can never be dispossest'd of it. He cannot be without Wisdom, and may as well cease to be, as cease to be Wise. Whereas our Wisdom is a contingent and uncertain thing. An ill turn of the Brain prevents it, and a Blow or a Sicknefs may take it away. 'Tis not necessary we should have it (for a Man may be a Man without being a *Wise* Man) and when we once have it; 'tis not necessary we should be always possess'd of it. For we are contingent even in *Being*, and there is nothing necessarily belonging to us but upon supposition, which is the case of our Immortality as to Corruption, as was shewn before. But our Wisdom is not so much as *that*, as not following the supposition of our *Being*, as the other does. Sometimes we have not a Natural Capacity for it, and when we have, it depends upon so many things

things without our selves, as Circumstances of Life, good Education, right method of Study, and that that Capacity is not always, indeed very seldom reduced to act.

But to touch upon a Thought or Two of a more Metaphysical Consideration. God understands all things by himself, as needing no other intelligible Species than his own Essence, which is the reason and similitude of all Being, and from the different imitation of which is all the diversity that is in things. Whereas we are not a Light to our selves, so as to understand things by the Perfections of our own Nature, and therefore must understand them either by such intelligible Species drawn from things as the common Philosophy imagins, or (which is more reasonable to suppose) in the *Divine Ideas*.

Again, the Knowledge of God is *simultaneous*. He does not perceive things successively, one after another as we do, but as he knows all things, so he knows them all *together*, as perfectly comprehending his own Essence, in which all things are concluded. And therefore in seeing his own Essence, he at once beholds all things. For indeed the knowledge of God is as his Eternity is, wherein there is no *before* nor *after*,



*after*, but one fix'd and permanent *now*. For otherwise if he understood things successively, he would be sometimes intelligent in Power, and sometimes in Act, being in Power as to the Second, while he actually understood the First. And therefore it is necessary to say that he understands all things *together* under one comprehensive View. *Together* I mean as to the Operation of his own Mind, tho not together always as to the things themselves, wherein there is an Order, not to be pretermitted or confounded by a perfect understanding, conceiving all things as they are: But now we do not only understand different things one after another by so many divided Acts of Thought, but even in the same thing we are often forced to use *Abstraction*, and to consider that by Parts which is really one and the same, as having not largeness of Mind enough to comprehend some Objects in one adequate View. And here we are fain to chew, before we can swallow.

Again, as a necessary consequence of this, the Knowledge of God cannot be *habitual*, as a great part of ours is. For if he actually knows all things at once, 'tis plain that he cannot know any thing by *Habit*, since so far as he knows by Habit, he does  
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not actually know. Besides that to know habitually is to be in power in order to actual Knowledge. Which is against the Supposition of a Being, which is a *pure Act*, as God is. 'Tis impossible therefore that any such thing as *habitual Knowledge* should belong to God. No, his Knowledge is always in Act, as his Being is. As there is a Light within him (the Ideas of his Nature) that always shines, so the Eye of his Mind is always open to it, that he may never have the least Interruption of so ravishing a view. But now the far greatest Part of our little Knowledge is in Habit, and Power only, and lies dormant, and so for want of a present Light we make a great many false Steps, stumble and fall, err and wander, sin and transgress, and in short act as foolishly as the most *Ignorant*.

To conclude, the Wisdom of God is not *discursive*, that is, he does not proceed from the Knowledge of one thing to that of another, as by a Principle or Medium, so as to syllogize, or gather a conclusion from Premises. Not but that he sees how the Conclusion follows from the Premises, and what connexion there is between them (for this is not arguing, but judging of an Argument, as *Aquinas* observes) but he does  
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it by considering both together, and not by gathering one from or by the other, as having both the Principle and the Conclusion under one and the same *intuitive View*. And so that Knowledge which we are fain to work out Step by Step, he has immediately, and without any intellectual Progress. For indeed tho' to reason well be a Perfection in the Rational Way, and for Creatures that need it, yet Reason it self is but a defect of Knowledge. Therefore God does not know one thing by another, but every thing immediately in it self. And if it be said that he knows all things by his *Essence*, it is true, but not as by a Principle or Medium, in order to a Conclusion, but only as by a Species or Idea, as the Angelical Doctor well distinguishes. So very much, and so every way does the Wisdom of God differ from and transcend ours, so that it may well be said, that *his Thoughts are not as our Thoughts, nor his Ways as our Ways*. And if the Wisdom of God be so vastly more excellent than ours, we have the less reason to admire that his *Immortality* should so far excell our Immortality that he should be said *only* to have it, *Being* (according to our conception of things) being the

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most



most Essential and Fundamental Attribute of the Deity.

49. And now the State of the Question concerning the Natural Immortality of the Soul stands briefly thus. It is inquired whether the Soul be Naturally Immortal or no? which however some may affirm at a venture, and without any more ado, yet there is no answering this Question to any purpose, or with any satisfaction of either Truth or Clearness, till it be first known not only what the Term *Natural* here signifies, but also to what it is applied. That is in other Words, till the Ambiguity of *Immortality* be distinguished, and the precise meaning of it be defined. Since till that be done, one cannot tell to what the word *Natural* is applied, nor consequently what is either ask'd or affirm'd by the *Natural Immortality of the Soul*, or whether one ought to affirm it or no. But no sooner are distinct Ideas affix'd to this Term, but it clearly appears, that if by *Immortality* you mean *Incorruption*, the Soul is then Naturally Immortal, as having Incorruptibility flowing from the very Nature of it. But if by *Immortality* you mean *Indefectibility* as to Being, or a Power of never ceasing to be, then 'tis necessary to be said that the Soul is not Naturally Immortal, as not having

having *Being* flowing from its own Nature as Incorruptibility does. So that now it appears in what sense the Natural Immortality of the Soul is to be asserted, and in what sense not. The Opponent may know what he has to oppose, and the Respondent what he has to defend, which I think is all that is to be aim'd at in the stating of any Question.

50. But tho' the Soul be not all over Naturally Immortal, yet however, since there is a Sense wherein it truly and properly is so, and since it is as Immortal upon the whole as any Creature can be, having Immortality both of Being and Incorruption too, tho' a *Natural Immortality* only as to the latter, as it ought by no means to be affirmed that the Soul is Mortal, so neither ought it simply and indefinitely, that it is *Naturally Mortal*. And therefore if any one should write a Book with this very express Purpose and Design, professing in the very Title of it to prove that the Soul is a Principle *Naturally Mortal*, he would do very ill. For this is to say that of the Soul simply, which is true only with a limitation, or in a certain respect, and looks as if the Author would perswade his Readers that the Soul was *all over* Naturally Mortal, and

had no such thing as a Natural Immortality belonging to it. Whereas on the contrary tho' the Soul (and the same may be said of any other Creature) has not within it self a power of perpetuating its own Being, but must depend for that upon a superiour Influence, yet however she is of her self, and by the necessity of her Nature *Incorruptible*, which is not only a proper Immortality (since whatever is corrupted ceases to be as to what it was, tho' absolutely it does not cease to be) but that very Immortality which the Scripture ascribes to the Soul, and makes to be the great discovery of Christianity, when it says of Christ, that he has abolish'd Death, and brought Life and Immortality to light by the Gospel \*. Where what we translate Immortality, is in the Greek Incorruption, and ought to be so render'd. This is the *Scriptural* Immortality of the Soul, the very same we have been hitherto contending for. And since the Soul Naturally has this, whoever shall absolutely say that she is Naturally Mortal, either means wrong, or very partially and disadvantageously, I may say injuriously expresses a Truth.

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\* 2 Tim. I. 10.



51. And this is all the Application which I think needful to make of these Considerations to the Learned Person upon whose occasion they were written, as not thinking my self worthy to take upon me to inform him from whom I am more fit, and more willing to learn, and who by these few hints relating to the Subject of his Book is better able to inform himself than I can do, if he shall think any thing here offer'd worthy of his Consideration. Nor is there any need of a more particular Application of these Principles for the sake of other Readers, who by comparing them with Mr. D——'s Book, may easily observe how far I agree with him, and how far I dissent from him, and where the Truth of the whole matter lies, as far as the Immortality of the Soul is concern'd. And farther I pretend not to meddle, nor even with this any more than to put the state of the Question in a true light, leaving other matters to those who either have, or shall be disposed to go into the Detail of the Argument, and thinking it enough for me to have supplied that Part which they are more likely to have left vacant. And therefore I shall detain my Reader no longer, than while I endeavour by a Moral Reflection.

Reflection or two after this Philosophical Entertainment, to leave a good Relish upon his Mind.

§2. And therefore as from the Doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul at large, it may be reasonably collected that they who are never to Die, should take great care how they Live, as also that it should be our first and our last concern that a Life which is to last always, and whose Lease is for Eternity, be a happy one, and not such a Life as is worse than Death, so from this particular way and manner of stating it, there are some particular Considerations that may be deduced.

As first, that since the Soul by the Privilege of her Birth-right inherits Incorruption, and is thereby so highly dignifi'd and distinguish'd in her Order and Character, and so far advanced above the Condition of all Corporeal Beings; that she do not debase the Dignity of this her excellent Nature, so as to place her self upon a level with them again, or rather set them above her, by submitting her self to the love of these Inferiour Things. For we confess a superiority in what we love, and unite our Hearts to, and in effect acknowledge it to be something better and more noble than our selves, as seeking Happiness

*the Natural Immortality of the Soul. III*

ness from it, and owning it as our good, and as that which perfects and improves our Being. But should the Soul *so* magnify and exalt the Objects of sense, or so lessen and degrade her self as this amounts to? What the Soul whose Descent is so high, and whose Native Excellency is so great? Should Light have Communion with Darkness, or an Incorruptible Nature cleave to things that are Corruptible, which are always wearing and decaying, and which perish in the very using? 'Tis enough for the Corruptible Body to press down the Soul, the Incorruptible Soul had not need to press down her *self*, by making her Court to Objects of a Nature and worth so very inferiour to her own. No, the very erect posture of our Bodies, shews which way we should direct our Minds, or if neglecting that Hint, we chuse rather to contemplate the Natural Dignity of the Soul it self, we shall soon see that she is an unfutable Match for sensible Objects, too Noble in her self, as well as too Nobly descended to be join'd to the things of this World, or to seek her Happiness in the place of Vanity, her Life in the Region of Death and Corruption. Much less ought she to place it in *such Corruptible things as Silver and Gold*, or in a full Purse,  
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or well furnish'd Granary, and say to her self, *Soul thou hast much Goods laid up for many Years.* She is much too great in her self for these little things, and design'd for greater, than to take up with them as her *Goods.* She ought therefore to remember her self, and the Dignity of her Nature when she is pursuing them, and not lay her honour in the Dust by such vile and unworthy Prosecutions, such mean and dishonourable Adherencies. But if she will contract an Alliance (as indeed she needs must, not being sufficient for her own Happiness) it should be with something higher than her self, that may dignify and innoble her by the Union. For that Love is, it unites the Heart to the inamouring Object, and makes it in a manner *One* with it. And accordingly \* *St. Paul* tells us, that *he that is join'd unto the Lord, becomes one Spirit.* Of so great consequence and importance is it to us what it is that we make the Object of our Love, since it *Transforms*, as well as *Unites.* For we become what we love, Carnal, Sensual and Material by uniting our selves to the World, and all over Spiritual and Divine

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\* 1 Cor. 6. 17.

by adhering unto God. And can we deliberate in such a different choice as this? In short therefore, an Incorruptible Nature such as the Soul is, should have an Incorruptible Treasure, and accordingly (as the Spirit of God advises) should set her Affections upon *things above*, the true Seat of Incorruption, and Center of Love, and not upon the things of the *Earth*, where there is nothing to be found that is either equal to her, or worthy of her.

53. Again 2dly, as the consideration of the Natural Incorruptibility of the Soul serves to direct and govern her *Love*, so also to regulate her *Fear*. For since she is Naturally Incorruptible, she ought to look upon her self as placed above the reach of Bodies, and the whole Effort of Corporeal Nature, so as not to be apprehensive of any danger from any of their Impressions or Assaults, or any injury she can receive by them that shall in the least affect her Life or Being. For as the Force of External Nature reaches not to *Annihilation*, so her own Nature exempts her from *Corruption*. As Bodies have no power at all to Annihilate, so even Corruption, the only Death they can inflict, has its Bounds and limits, *its hitherto shalt thou come and no further, which no violence can exceed.* It is indeed

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a Natural Effect, which the other is not, but such as cannot be produced but in Subjects capable of it, that is, in *Corporeal Things*. One Body can corrupt another, and 'tis what is doing every Moment, the Course of Nature being carried on by it, but 'tis not all the Bodies in the World that can corrupt *one* Soul. For indeed the great and indeed only force of Nature is *Motion*, and by this it is that all Natural Effects are wrought, but what is that to a Being that has no Parts to be moved, divided, or separated, either from the whole or from one another, or so much as to be put out of their Place or Order? 'Tis true indeed while she is in the Body, the Impressions of other Bodies upon hers may put her to pain, not directly, but by the Mediation of the Body, and that Law of Union which is between that and her self, and if the Impressions are very violent, the Effect will be what we call *Death* (which by the way is a great Happiness, since by this means great Evils soon cure themselves) and that Corruption which is intailed upon it. And then we lament and put on Mourning. But all the while 'tis not *her* life that is kill'd, nor *her* Nature that is Corrupted, by any of these Impressions, and therefore she ought not to fear them as threatening any danger to her Being. And  
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sure if she were in a State of *Separation* she would not. And does then the State of *Union* make any difference? Not sure as to her Life or Being, for she is no more Corruptible in the Body, than out of it, tho' by that means she becomes liable to some penal Inflictions. And tho' those Inflictions when violent may cause a *Dissolution*, yet that Dissolution goes no further than the Bodily Life, and so is indeed the death of the *Man*, but not of the *Soul*, which receives no change by it, but that of Liberty and Inlargement. And therefore even Philosophy will oblige us not to fear even Death it self as 'tis a *Dissolution*, tho' we may have reason to do so in other respects, as to the consequences of it, wherein tho' not our Being, yet our well-being may be concern'd. So far indeed Death may be a reasonable Object of Fear, but barely as a *Dissolution* of *Nature*, since the Soul has no part in it, 'tis plain that so (even Philosophically speaking) we have no reason, nor ought to fear it. So very true and well grounded upon the Nature of things are those Words of the Divine Oracle, *Be not afraid of them that kill the Body, and after that have no more that they can do.* Luke 12. 4. Well but tho' they can do no more than that, yet *that* it seems they can do, and is not that ground enough for fear? Yes in

a way of necessary caution, and so far as Self-preservation is concern'd and directs, but not so as to neglect a Duty, or commit a Sin against God for fear of offending Men. For after all 'tis God is our best Life, and we die the worst Death when we lose him. And therefore it must be Folly and Madness to the height, to ruine that part of us which is capable of enjoying him for ever, to secure that which must die, and which no Art can long preserve, and whereby we can enjoy only the poor and low Pleasures of Sense, and that too but for the continuance of a momentary Life, that departs like a shadow, and is as vain too while it lasts. Be not therefore so ill a Philosopher (not to say *Christian*) as for fear of Men to sin against God, who indeed is the most just and proper Object of our Fear, as having an absolute Power over the *whole* Man. For tho' we cannot conceive how he should corrupt the Soul, and have all the reason in the World to believe that he *will not* Annihilate it, yet 'tis certain that he can do that which is infinitely worse than either, and that is to condemn us to the most wretched and miserable State of Being. And therefore 'tis upon this Consideration that our Saviour further adds as the full of his Advice and Direction upon

upon this Matter, But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear. Fear him, which after he has Killed, hath power to cast into Hell, yea I say unto you, Fear him.

54. Again 3dly, Since this Naturally Incorruptible Soul of ours has yet no Immortality of *Being* from her own Nature, but purely from the power of God sustaining it, then how much less reason has she to think, that she can have in her self a Foundation of *well-being*, or be sufficient to her self for her own *Happiness*. For 'tis the Plenitude of Being that is in God whereby he is qualified to become a satisfying Good, a Beatific Object to himself. For 'tis the *Knowledge* and *Love* of himself wherein he is Happy, and were there not such a fulness and perfection of Being in him, neither would the *Knowledge* of himself be such a reposing and contenting Theory, nor the *Love* of himself so sweet and delightful an Operation as to render him so Infinitely Happy as he is. But now we have not this Fullness of Being, as appears even by our insufficiency to subsist in Being by our selves. For 'tis nothing but deficiency in Being, or because Being is not Essential to us, that is the ground of that insufficiency. And the same Deficiency in Being that makes us unable to *subsist* by our selves,  
will



will also make us as insufficient to be *Happy* in our selves. For the Ground and Reason of both is the same. Sufficiency in Being would make us *self-subsistent*, and the very same sufficiency in Being would also make us *self-satisfied* and *self-reposed*. And therefore since we have not this Foundation in our selves for Being, we may conclude that we have it not for Happiness neither, and consequently that we cannot possibly be Happy in the fruition of our selves, and in the *solitude* of our own Perfections. 'Tis God therefore only that can make us Happy. God that is the Stay of our Being, must also be the Ground of our *well-Being*. God that makes himself Happy can only make us so. He that is *All*, and he that always *Is*, and in the Enjoyment of whom we shall enjoy *all Good*, because all *Being*, 'tis he only that can quiet our Desires, supply our Indigence, fill our Emptiness, and intirely satisfy the Hunger, and quench the thirst of our Souls. And therefore as we Naturally lean upon the support of his Arm for our subsistence in Being, so we should by a voluntary Application of our Minds as much depend upon him for our *Happiness*, adhere to him by all the Unions of Love, and rest in him with the whole weight of our Natures.

tures. And as we ought to depend upon him for Happiness, so also for the *Means* of it, and in particular for such continual supplies of his *Grace* as are necessary to attain it. Humbly seeking to him for it, and as humbly trusting that he will not deny us such a Measure of it as shall be sufficient for us, that Argument of our Saviour against our being over-solicitous for the necessities of this present Life, that he that has given us *Life* and *Body*, will not deny us Raiment for the One, and Food for the Other, holding as well here. For tho' I will not say that our Being is *more* than the Grace of God, as 'tis said in the other Case, that *Life is more than Meat, and the Body than Rayment*, yet I think I may say, that we have no reason to think that he that has given us a Being, and still continues it to us by the sustaining Influence of his Almighty Power, will deny us what is absolutely necessary for the Happiness of that Being. Unless we will say, that God has more kindness for Mens Bodies than their Souls, from whence his own Image is return'd to him, which is against all order and reason to suppose. From whence we may further deduce no inconsiderable Argument against the *predestinarian* Hypothesis according to some Mens way of stating it,

it, that *sponge* of *all Religion* (as an ingenious Person calls it) that with one stroke blots out and effaces it all. For if God will not deny us that which is *necessary* to the Happiness of that Being which he has given us, much less will he absolutely deny us *Happiness* it self; and if he will not refuse us a competency of his *Grace*, it seems against reason to suppose that he should by any absolute Antecedent Decree of his, have excluded any Man from a possibility of his *Glory*.

55. Again lastly, since the Soul tho' by Nature Incorruptible, has yet no Natural Immortality as to *Being*, but as to that depends as intirely upon him who is the Fountain of it as the poorest worm does that creeps upon the Ground, not being able of her self to subsist so much as for a Moment (for if she could subsist by her self this Moment, she might as well for the next, and so for ever, and this she might have done *backwards* as well as *forwards*, and so be Naturally *Eternal* as well as *Immortal*) I say since the Soul stands thus precariously as to her Being, owing every Moment of it to the conservative Influence of the Almighty, in whom is the Breath of her Nostrils, and from whose Fontal Vitality are derived all those Streams which continually



tinually feed her little Lamp of Life, this sure if any thing ought to suppress and keep down her Pride, and depress her into the lowest esteem of her self and her own Perfections, make her refrain her self in the midst of her fondest Indulgencies, and keep her self *low* like as a *Child* that is *weaned* from his Mother. For indeed she is no better than such a One as to any sufficiency or self-stability of her own, being no more able to secure her self from *Perishing*, than the other is from *Falling*. Man is all over feeble and infirm, even to Pity and Compassion. And accordingly the Psalmist draws an Argument from thence to implore the compassion of him who best knows how infirm we are. *Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak*, Psal. 6. 2. But the greatest Instance as well as Argument of Human Infirmary is that we cannot by our selves subsist in *Being*, as having no Spring or Root of it in our selves, but must be beholden to the Being of Beings to support and uphold us in it. How vain a thing then is Man, when as his Body is *Naturally Corruptible*, so even the best Part of him, his Soul has no Principle of Being in it self, but is *Naturally* liable to a more killing and devouring Death than Corruption, even that of *Annihilation*, from

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which

which, as averse as she is to it, she has no strength to defend her self, The weaned Child may in time out-grow its weakness and recover strength to stand and go without the help of the Nurse, but the Soul is in this respect always an *Infant*, and can never subsist by it self. This therefore should humble her to the very last degree, teach her to be poor and low in Spirit, to renounce and disclaim all Strength and Ability of standing upon her own Bottom, all Natural Indefectibility, and to live in a constant Dependency upon that God who is all her Strength and Stay, her *Tree of Immortality*, and in whom are all the Springs both of her Life and Happiness. It should teach her to consider her self as nothing without him, as well as nothing in comparison of him, and therefore to walk humbly with him, and to glory only in him. And above all not to sin against him by whom she subsists, and upon whom she lives, but to employ in his Service that Being which is not only his Original Gift, but which as by a *repeated Creation* she is continually receiving from him, and to return him her devoutest Thanks and Praise for so great and so *multiplied* a Benefit, as also to adore and admire the Infinite and Immense Perfection of that sublime Nature  
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of his, whereby he Necessarily, Eternally, and Immutably is *what he is*, without variableness or shadow of turning, ever ascribing all Honour, Glory and Power to the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, and only Wise God, the Blessed and only Potentate, and *who only has Immortality*:

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P O S T S C R I P T.

I N the Second Part of this Treatise, I have taken the liberty to express my dissent from a Great Man (for whose Authority I have otherwise a peculiar Reverence) as to the Creature's having a Power to *not Being*, which in his Book *Contra Gentiles* he will not have to be any thing in the Creature, but only that God has a Power to Annihilate him. The like to which I find also in his \*Theological Sums, in these Words, *Cum dicitur aliquid vertibile in nihil, non importatur in Creaturâ Potentia ad non esse, sed in Creatore Potentia ad hoc quod esse non influat.* When 'tis said that any thing may be turn'd into nothing, this does not import any Power that the Creature has to not Being, but only that

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\* Part 1. Qu. 75. Art. 6.



*the Creator has a Power not to influence Being to it.* Now in opposition to this Assertion of his, to what I have already offer'd, I now further add. That as to every Passive Power there corresponds some Active Power in Nature, because otherwise that Passive Power would be in vain, so likewise 'tis as true the other way, that to every Active Power there must be a Passive Power that corresponds, or else that Active Power will be Idle and ineffectual, that is indeed *inactive*. And therefore if there be in God a Power to make the Creature not to be, there must be also in the Creature a correspondent Power to not Being. Besides if the Annihilability of the Creature or (according to the Language of *Aquinas*) its *Vertibility into Nothing* did import only a Power in God, and not any thing in the Creature disposing it for not Being, then since the Power of God is always the same in it self, and is withal the only thing supposed to be concern'd, how comes it to pass that God cannot annihilate *himself*, as well as the Creature. The true reason indeed why he cannot, is because he is a necessary Being, as having Being essential to him. But I say if *Annihilability* imports only a Power in God, and God has always that Power equally

equally in himself (for as to that there can be no Difference) upon this supposition there can be no reason given why he should not be able to Annihilate himself as well as any thing else. The difference therefore must be taken from the *Object*, since there is none in the *Power*, and the true Reason why God can annihilate the Creature, and not himself, must be because there is in the Creature a real Intrinsic Power to not Being, whereas in himself there is no such Power, as being not only a *Pure Act* (which excludes all Passive Power whatsoever) but also as having Being of his very *Essence*. I conclude therefore, that the Power which the Creature has to be Annihilated is not the mere Power which God has to Annihilate him, but a Power to not being really subjected in the Creature, and which renders him Naturally liable to Annihilation. If it be inquired what that is, I answer that it is the very Natural Impotency and Infirmary of the Creature in Being, in that Being is not essential to it, as it is to God, and so not necessarily existing, nor being consequently able to subsist by it self, it needs the continual Influence of its Creator to preserve and uphold it in Being. Now I say this is truly a Power to not Being, and lays in the Creature a real Foundation for  
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Annihilation, because this Necessity of an External Support to preserve it renders it Annihilable upon the Subtraction of that Support, which otherwise it would not be, tho' the Power of God be supposed still the same. Now herein I not only prove, but *explain* that there must be a Power to not being really subjected in the Creature: Without which how there should be a Power in God to Annihilate him, is not I think to be understood.

To what I have said in the former part of this Discourse concerning the distinction of *Natural* and *Positive*, I add this further Remark, that by Natural here is not to be understood that which proceeds from *Natural Causes*. That indeed I allow to be a true and proper acceptation of Natural, but not as used in this Distinction. For the Immortality of *Adam*, as continued to him by the use of the Tree of Life, may be said (so far at least) to have proceeded from a Natural Cause, there being no reason to think but that the Tree of Life, tho' a Symbol perhaps of higher Mysteries, was as much a Natural Plant as any that grew in the Garden, as also that the salutary Effect which it had for the conservation of Life was as truly a Natural Effect. And yet the  
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Immortality of *Adam* was not truly Natural, but *Positive*, as not deriving from his own Nature, but from without, tho' from a Cause that was Natural in it self. As on the contrary, the Immortality of God is from a *supernatural* Cause or Principle, and yet it is in the strictest Sense Natural, because that Supernatural Principle is himself, to whose Nature or Essence Being belongs. By Natural therefore as used in this Distinction, we are to understand that Property or Affection which flows from the Nature of the *thing it self* to whom it belongs, and not that which is the Effect of Natural Causes at large. Which indeed is Natural in Opposition to *Miraculous*, but not as opposed to *Positive*.

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